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ABSTRACT

School leaders have begun to understand that "change is a process." Leaders must facilitate change, not merely disseminate or direct it. This publication presents findings of the Leadership for Change Project (LFC). The LFC studied six sites at different stages of the school-improvement process, including two "developmental" sites in Arkansas and Texas that had just launched major improvement efforts, and four "historical" schools (one in Louisiana, one in New Mexico, and two in Oklahoma) that had a history of school-improvement. Data, collected during 1992-95, were obtained through face-to-face interviews, observations, telephone interviews, document analysis, and questionnaires. The following factors were identified as facilitators of or impediments to change: organizational rigidity, time shortage, administrative support, administrative communication, support network, and state-level support. In addition, school improvement is a progression of stages: getting started, maintaining momentum, and fostering a climate conducive to change. Two tables and one figure are included. Appendices contain a list of site characteristics, methodological information, a list of LFC publications, and a glossary. (Contains references throughout the text.) (LMI)

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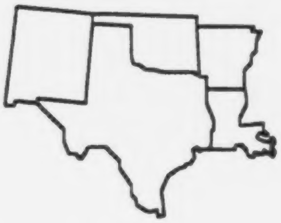
Improvement Strategies at Six Culturally Different Schools

FINAL REPORT

FY91 - FY95



Leadership for Change Project

(Projects 3.1 and 3.2)

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Foreword

The Leadership for Change Project (LFC) is part of SEDL's regional educational laboratory contract with the Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI), U.S. Department of Education. The LFC Project has four components: (1) conducting a set of case studies of leadership and school improvement, (2) producing three literature syntheses, (3) disseminating information on school improvement primarily through a publication series titled *Issues...about Change*, and (4) planning and conducting leadership training institutes with ongoing networking among those attending the institutes. This report is the fourth and final report about the case studies. It is intended to stand alone, without the necessity of reading the previous reports, and covers the most important findings since data collection began in January 1992.

Initially, five schools—one from each of the five states in SEDL's region—were chosen for the case studies. Later, a second school in Oklahoma replaced the first, although data had also been collected at the first school. Nancy Fuentes, author of this report, assisted in collecting data at all of the schools, but at least three, if not more, SEDL staff members collected or analyzed data at each school. Current and former staff members whose published or unpublished reports were used to prepare this final report are listed below. A site paper about each school is included in this report, and the authors of these site papers appear in italics (more than one person in some cases).

Arkansas	Vicki Boyd, Patricia Deloney, and *Nancy Fuentes*
Louisiana	*Shirley Hord* and *Vicki Boyd*
New Mexico	Sylvia Méndez-Morse, Patricia Guerra, and *Carol Nasworthy*
Oklahoma (original site)	*Nancy Fuentes*, *Carol Nasworthy*, and *Linda Joshua*
Oklahoma (second site)	*Nancy Fuentes*, Richard Tompkins, and Dalinda Rodriguez
Texas	Richard Tompkins, Dalinda Rodriguez, Nancy Fuentes, and *Alicia Castro*

Leadership strategies and factors that facilitate or impede school improvement are best understood in dynamic relationship to each other within the context of the particular school. Thus, the schools and what they were trying to accomplish are described here, in enough detail to provide that context. All of the schools, which have been given fictitious names for this report, were highlighted in *Issues...about Change* (see Publications List at the end of this report).

Improvement Strategies at Six Culturally Different Schools is intended to be shared with the schools that participated as sites for the case studies, with OERI, and with other collaborators.

Introduction

When we embarked on this project, we naively assumed that once the ideas were in place, the implementation of the program would be easy.

Westerberg, Thomas, and Stein (1994, p. 31)

This naive assumption has arguably undergirded many past reform efforts, which focused on disseminating information about proven or promising programs and practices. "But just an idea is not sufficient," Goodlad (1975) suggested, "there must be a vehicle and infrastructure to carry the idea, plant it, and subsequently, nourish it" (p. 178). As Glatter (1987) pointed out, "there has too often been an assumption that you only need to introduce an innovation for it to be effectively absorbed by the institution" (p. 61).

At the other extreme, reforms are mandated outright. Mandates may clarify expectations and show administrative support, but they go awry because of lack of attention to the other requirements of successful implementation. Often a mandate is imposed without enough time for a school to learn about, plan for, and carry out the mandate. Leaders may recognize the importance of initial assessment, problem-solving, and goal-setting, but they underestimate the importance of continual assessment, monitoring, and adjustment. They may see the need for initial training but not the need for time to practice new skills and for ongoing staff development. They may require an initial action plan but not ongoing progress reports throughout the implementation process. Often there are start-up funds to initiate a new practice, but little in the way of new resources to support the effort thereafter.

Fortunately, leaders have begun to understand that "change is a process." Research on change provides insights into the role of the change facilitator and the need for a supportive context. Support should include interpersonal contact, guidance, coaching, technical assistance, feedback, reinforcement, and celebration. Leaders must facilitate change, not merely disseminate or direct it. Superintendents, principals, lead teachers, and community leaders need a better understanding of what they can do to facilitate and support the implementation of new programs and practices.

Literature on Leadership

The Concerns-Based Adoption Model (CBAM), originally developed at the Research and Development Center for Teacher Education at The University of Texas at Austin (Hall and Hord, 1987), provided diagnostic and prescriptive concepts and tools to support the implementation of change, explaining how leaders can take charge of change so that the change is actually realized in schools and classrooms (Hord, Rutherford, Huling-Austin, and Hall, 1987). More recent reports of system-wide change discuss how to shape school culture in different contexts to support change and improvement, adding significantly to the knowledge base (Joyce, 1990; Deal and Peterson, 1990).

Hord (1992) has synthesized the literature on leadership, identifying the critical components of leadership listed below.

Leadership Component	Description of the Component
1. Developing and communicating a vision	Both having and communicating a vision for improvement, i.e., what the school might look like in the future and how to get there; shaping the development of a shared vision.
2. Planning and providing resources	Being proactive; scheduling; anticipating outcomes or consequences; developing a plan that can evolve, based on experience with what is working and what is not working. (Planning is necessary to obtain administrative support, and to obtain and allocate resources. Leaders must ensure that those who are expected to adopt a new practice have the resources they need, not only financial or material, but also the time, training, and assistance. Resource allocations must emphasize priorities.)
3. Providing training and development	Both front-end and periodic training, as well as ongoing coaching and assistance—demonstrations, modeling, practice, and workshops. (Training and ongoing assistance are necessary to ensure that those expected to adopt a new practice develop the skills they need for the new practice.)
4. Monitoring and checking progress	Assessing progress both formally and informally; seeking and giving feedback. Keeping people informed; allowing ideas and problems to surface; making adjustments to deal with the problems.
5. Continuing to give assistance	Coaching and providing practical assistance or resources at the very time they are needed. Giving positive strokes; rewarding or celebrating the changes that have been made to carry out the plan.
6. Creating an atmosphere and culture for change	Creating a positive school culture with norms of continuous improvement, collegiality, and collaboration. Sharing ideas and taking risks; acknowledging that mistakes will be made and learning from mistakes.

Leadership for Change Project

Hord's literature synthesis was part of the Leadership for Change Project at the Southwest Educational Development Laboratory (SEDL). This project focused on implementation—on identifying the leadership strategies that lead to successful implementation of a change, and the factors that tend to facilitate or impede school improvement. The LFC Project entailed four major activities:

1. Producing three literature syntheses:
   (a) *Facilitative Leadership: The Imperative for Change*
   (b) *Leadership Characteristics that Facilitate School Change*
   (c) *School Context: Bridge or Barrier to Change ?*
2. Conducting case studies of leadership and school improvement

3. Developing an array of materials, training activities, and other products to help leaders understand and manage the implementation of new practices
4. Disseminating these products for educational leaders

These activities were implicitly interwoven.

SEDL initiated the case studies of leadership and school improvement in 1992, selecting a school in each of the five states in its region: Arkansas, Louisiana, New Mexico, Oklahoma, and Texas. Together these studies had a two-fold purpose: (1) to discover how innovative leaders successfully implement changes intended to have a positive impact on at-risk students; and (2) to investigate system contextual factors that facilitate or impede the implementation of changes. (See the glossary for definitions of important terms.) The basic research questions to be addressed were:

1. What are the demographic characteristics of each site at the beginning of the study?
2. What is the school's history of change and improvement, i.e., what school improvements have been implemented or are underway? What changes or improvements were specifically aimed at helping at-risk students?
3. What were the effective and ineffective strategies that leaders at each site used to develop, implement, and continue school improvements?
4. What contextual factors appeared to facilitate or impede school improvements for at-risk students?

A modest amount of data had already been collected during one visit to the Oklahoma school when factors beyond SEDL's control made it necessary to replace the site with another historical site in Oklahoma. Thus, data were obtained from a total of six schools, although information from the original Oklahoma site was limited.

The impetus for change varied among the schools, from positive to negative—that is, from leadership initiative to the threat of being closed down. All the schools had large percentages of minority and low-income students, measured by participation in the free and reduced-price lunch program. Two of the schools were made up of primarily African-American students; two had a significant majority of Hispanic students; and the two Oklahoma schools had high percentages of American Indian students. Since the students and even the staff belonged predominantly to one minority group, the project afforded a unique opportunity to study perceptions of leaders and their effectiveness with at-risk students from different cultural perspectives.

Since the schools were quite different from each other in context, organization, and culture, this report includes a site paper about each school. Following the series of site papers, the report provides general observations and lessons learned about leadership strategies and implementation from all six schools.

The Schools

SEDL selected schools at different stages of the school improvement process. Two "developmental" studies focused on schools just launching a major improvement effort, making it possible to examine their efforts as

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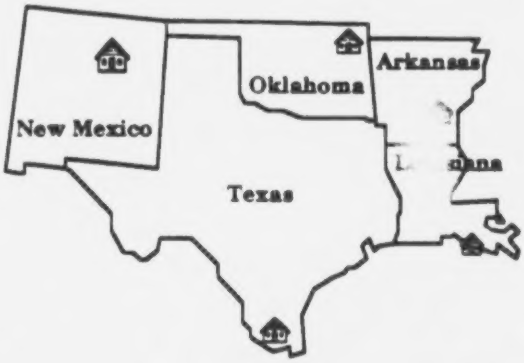
they unfolded. The other three "historical" studies examined schools that had a history of school improvement. SEDL traced these schools' experiences with school improvement in retrospect and followed ongoing improvements. The strength of the study design was that comparisons between the developing schools and the historical schools provided insights into the change process over time.

Case Study Sites



Historical Sites

Louisiana: Southeast Elementary

Southeast Elementary was an urban elementary school serving students in grades K–6. Roughly 60 percent of the students were African-American, and the population of Hispanic students had recently risen to 10 percent. The school nearly closed in the 1970s because of lack of enrollment, but parents pushed to keep it open. With support from an active community association whose membership was broader than the typical parent-teacher organization, Southeast Elementary became a magnet school to attract more students. Since then, four principals had presided over the school and shaped its development.

When teachers expressed concern that they lacked time for group problem-solving, the first principal revised the school schedule to allow more time for collaboration. Under the revised schedule, still in place today, the school day was lengthened for four days each week and shortened on Thursdays so that staff could use this afternoon in various ways for individual and group work. On one Thursday afternoon each month, for example, the lower and upper grade teachers had separate meetings. At least one Thursday afternoon each month was devoted to Faculty Study, in which the entire faculty listened to guest speakers or discussed school-wide issues.

In addition to Faculty Study, a daily Morning Meeting was instituted, which brought staff and students together every day. Parents were encouraged to join these meetings. At Morning Meeting, students showed their artwork, read poems or stories, or shared special events in their lives. Morning Meeting was also used to introduce new programs such as peer mediation to the student body. During the 1991–92 school year, Southeast Elementary became the first elementary school in the city to implement a peer mediation program in which upper grade students were trained to serve as mediators in conflicts between students. Exemplifying a learning community with shared leadership, the school was recognized in 1991–92 as one of the state's Blue Ribbon schools.

New Mexico: Crossroads Middle School

At Crossroads Middle School, more than 80 percent of the students were Hispanic. In top-down fashion, a visionary superintendent and his assistant superintendent restructured the school from a traditional junior high to a middle school with a Family Plan, in which students and their teachers were grouped together much like a family unit. Students took classes in four core subjects: language arts, social studies, mathematics, and science. The students within a *family* rotated among these classes, and the teachers in the family had a common preparation period so that they could meet to coordinate lessons or to address the problems of particular students. Under this structure, some of the "families" developed interdisciplinary units and organized projects such as a dinner theater that gave students experience in planning, learning, and performing. A new development during the 1993–94 school year extended the Family Plan concept to special education, so that special education students could move from class to class within a family, just as regular students did.

The school participated in two statewide initiatives, the Rockefeller Academy and Re:Learning. The superintendent who initiated the Family Plan resigned in November 1992, but the organizational structure of the Family Plan remained intact. During the last two years, the campus layout was revised and buildings were renovated around the Family Plan. However, some staff reported that working relationships returned to "every teacher for himself" patterns of instruction. The development and use of interdisciplinary units decreased because staff lacked sufficient time for planning.

Oklahoma: Green Country School

Green Country was a Pre-K–8 school in one of the poorest counties in Oklahoma. Approximately 75 percent of the students and 65 percent of the teachers were of Cherokee descent. A striking characteristic of Green Country was its impressive use of grants. With its first major grant, the school built a psychomotor center, where colors, shapes, manipulatives, and body movement reinforced the language and mathematical concepts that students were learning in class. Students in the younger grades learned both English and Cherokee in the psychomotor center. Over the years the school added numerous facilities and programs to offer variety to students with different learning styles and cultural backgrounds.

Green Country strived to be the center of the community. It offered community education programs and made its facilities available to the public for daily activities before and after school. In 1994 it introduced a family literacy program for adults and their children. Green Country obtained input from the community in its strategic planning process. With the passage of time, the community witnessed changes to the school that reflected its input. In 1988, the school was recognized as a National School of Excellence.

Oklahoma: Road's End School

Road's End School (the LFC Project's original Oklahoma site) was a rural K–12 school in Oklahoma with a total of 122 students housed in a single building. Roughly 45 percent of the students were American Indian. The road to the town was paved, but the paving ended in town, leaving only dirt roads in the local area. With virtually no visible business sector, the community appeared to be in economic decline. For shopping and medical services, people traveled to a larger town 20 miles away.

Although the elementary and secondary grades sat at opposite ends of the same school building, there were technically two schools. During the 1989–90 school year, the state listed both as "low performing." The threat of consolidation or other state intervention was the impetus for change at Road's End.

The state provided "special funding" for low-performing schools. Under the leadership of a new superintendent, the school facility improved considerably. Communication opened up, three committees were established to address different aspects of the school environment, and several different types of training on teaching strategies were introduced. In 1991, high school students' test scores improved, and the high school was removed from the list of low-performing schools. The elementary school was removed from the list in 1992.

Developmental Sites

Arkansas: Delta High School

Delta High was a high school in Arkansas, located in the Mississippi Delta, where some of the poorest counties in the U.S. are located. When the study began, African-Americans made up 56 percent of the student population. The school was one of a handful of schools that had volunteered to be the first in Arkansas to implement a rigorous academic program called Ventures in Education (VIE). With support from a foundation, these schools worked with the foundation's state project director, who coordinated their efforts with the VIE program at the national level. Thus, the state project director acted as an external facilitator, assisting Delta High with the implementation of the VIE program.

After much planning, the VIE program was launched at the start of the 1992–93 school year with approximately 100 students participating in the 9th and 10th grades. Participation was voluntary, but the students' test scores had to meet certain minimum criteria. Thus, from the beginning, VIE involved only some of the students and teachers. The pros and cons of implementing a program school-wide versus implementing it with selected students constituted an important aspect of the case study of Delta High.

VIE had been shown to be effective for poor and minority students in several parts of the country. Consistent with this finding, recent test data from Delta High indicated not only gains for VIE students, but also some school-wide gains in the ninth and tenth grades. The gains helped to counter resistance and to reinforce those who had supported the program.

Texas: Border High School

Border High was a large high school with 2,500–2,800 students near the United States/Mexico border, amidst some of the poorest counties in the country. Low-income students made up 80 percent of the student population, 98 percent of whom were Hispanic. The number of students varied throughout the school year, as migrant students gradually arrived and later gradually departed.

The school was one of 83 schools selected in 1992 to participate in the Partnership Schools Initiative (PSI) of the Texas Education Agency (TEA). This initiative strived to improve student outcomes and close performance gaps among various student groups. Placing emphasis on outcomes, the TEA promoted more flexibility in the policies and procedures used by the PSI schools to achieve desired outcomes. The TEA streamlined the procedures for PSI schools to obtain waivers of rules and regulations, such as the limit on days devoted to staff development. With support from the TEA, each regional education service center had a PSI coordinator who worked with the PSI schools in that region.

Border High's school improvement plan focused on "re-culturing" the school. For example, the principal wanted teachers to feel more personally responsible for the success of their students. The school sought to improve attitudes, mental models, and expectations through a three-pronged development approach which included the following: (1) monthly staff development sessions for staff; (2) Saturday workshops and other activities for students; and (3) parenting classes and activities for parents. As a result, staff reported working better together, feeling more unified, contacting parents more often, and seeing parents more involved in the education of their children.

Activities with the Schools

Each school was asked to designate five staff members to comprise the "site research team" that SEDL would contact for planning its site visits and for telephone interviews between site visits. SEDL convened five meetings of these school teams between June 1992 and October 1995. At the first meeting, which was held in Austin at SEDL, a teacher from the Louisiana team suggested that each of the remaining meetings be held at one of the schools, so that the teams could visit each other's campuses (see *Getting the Sites Together* in the appendix for details of these meetings). These meetings allowed the teams to learn from each other, and each provided both specific information about the local context and general information about implementation and school improvement. The meetings ensured that the Leadership for Change staff's research was mutually beneficial to both SEDL and to the schools participating as sites in the research.

Interviews with students at the Texas site and at the Louisiana site were conducted for a study of students' daily life in schools. This study was a project of the Restructuring Collaborative, a cooperative effort of several regional educational laboratories. Approximately 20 educators from around the country met at the Texas school from April 29–30, 1994. Four staff and two students from the school also joined the group. Seniors, chosen to be broadly representative of the school, were asked in individual and group interviews to describe a typical class, what teachers were doing and what they *should* be doing to help students learn. These seniors were also asked what they themselves did and could do to learn and succeed in school. At the Louisiana site, one SEDL staff member and an intern from the Minority Internship Program (MIP) interviewed 28 students in all elementary grades, asking similar questions but allowing students to draw pictures as well as provide verbal answers. The Restructuring Collaborative was experimenting with ways to assess students' perspectives about school life and success, but the interviews provided useful information for the Leadership for Change Project as well.

The next section of this report is a series of site papers, each of which tells the story of one of the schools. These papers focus on leadership strategies for improving schools and on the factors that facilitated or impeded change.

Site Papers: The Historical Sites

The grades served by the four historical sites were: K–6, K–8, K–12, and 6–8. The climate for change at the K–6 and K–8 schools was open and receptive. At the K–12 school, the elementary teachers were most open to change. Restructuring at the middle school, on the other hand, was implemented in a top-down manner, and many staff were initially opposed to the change. A visionary leader was the impetus for change at two of the schools, while the threat of closing was the impetus at the other two schools.

Louisiana: A School "Learning Community" Where Teachers Were the First Learners

In a three-story saltbox-style building on a broad boulevard in a large urban city, children and teachers gather for Morning Meeting. They meet today, as they do every day, in Southeast Elementary School's "auditorium." There are no seats, and only the presence of a stage indicates that the place is an auditorium.

The school is far more, however, than the less-than-marvelous facility in which it is housed. This is a place where children are valued, respected, and cared for. Just as the children feel cared for, the faculty feels nurtured. Voices from the faculty portray this difference:

> We are here for the children, not the other way around.

> We welcome people and take them to our hearts. There is a lot of spontaneity and creative work going on. Teachers help out parents and parents help out teachers—it's like a family.

> I looked around and decided this is the school where I want my child to be...and it was the kind of school I would like to teach in.

There is the feeling of "a community that works here together; we support each other, and that comes across for four hundred kids, where we strive for a social/racial balance in our student enrollment."

> If the world is made up of rainbow kids, then we need to have that here too.

> We believe in the whole child, that all children can learn. We are trying to teach them to deal with the whole world, rather than just make it to the next grade.

> We believe that children are human beings, not just miniature adults; they are very complicated, wonderful persons, and are not around just to be seen and not heard....This school is louder and kids are more active; they have a lot of room to grow.

Teachers in this school have a lot of room to grow as well. They gain individually from each other. As one teacher stated, "I am learning so much because constantly somebody is putting something in my mailbox to try out. I have been given a lot of room to fail and to try something else." The school has a relaxed atmosphere in which teachers can use their own style without concern about "someone hanging over your head." The guideline is to use what works for the teacher and the children.

If teachers have creative ideas, they feel they can try them out without first "running to the office" to get permission. Teachers spend time—a lot of extra time—at the school, putting in the extra effort required to arrange new experiences for children. Not only do they gain *individually from* each other, but they learn *collectively with* each other through regularly scheduled "faculty study."

In interviews that SEDL conducted with school staff, answers to the interview questions were highly convergent. After the first couple of site visits to the school, several things seemed clear: the entire faculty interacted with each other at a regularly scheduled time and place, spoke as one voice about their school and their role in it, shared a clear vision of what they wanted their school to be for children, participated in decision making, and practiced norms of critical inquiry regarding the effectiveness of their work and their relationships with children. In combination, these factors contributed to continuous school improvement—this constituted the researchers' initial working hypothesis and contributed to their emerging grounded theory of school context and culture and its effect on the capacity of schools to change.

It appeared that the school culture at Southeast Elementary was one in which adults operated as a "learning organization" (Senge, 1990). In interviews, the school's teachers made frequent references to the four principals who had, over time, contributed to the school's methods and operations.

The School as a "Learning Community": A New Paradigm

As data collection and analysis led to the emergence of working hypotheses, a review of the findings of other researchers was conducted. The particular type of culture that exists at Southeast Elementary prompted the authors to investigate the literature on "learning communities" and the role of leaders in shaping the school's culture.

"Learning community" has become a popularly used term in educational literature, particularly with regard to school reform. The idea of a "learning community" is an adaptation of the term "learning organization," described by Senge (1990). "Learning organizations," according to Senge, are ones "where people continually expand their capacity to create the results they truly desire, where new and expansive patterns of thinking are nurtured, where collective aspiration is set free, and where people are continually learning how to learn together" (p. 3).

According to Senge, a learning organization practices five disciplines: shared vision, mental models, team learning, personal mastery, and systems thinking. It is systems thinking that helps one to understand the "subtlest aspect of the learning organization—the new way individuals perceive themselves and their world. At the heart of a learning organization is a shift of mind—from seeing ourselves as separate from the world to connected to the world, from seeing problems as caused by someone or something 'out there' to seeing how our own actions create the problems we experience. A learning organization is a place where people are continually discovering how they create their reality. And how they can change it" (Senge, 1990, p. 12).

This shift of mind may also be characterized as a paradigm shift, as conceptualized by Kuhn. Kuhn (1970) defines a paradigm in two ways: "On the one hand, it stands for the entire constellation of beliefs, values, techniques, and so on shared by the members of a given community" (p. 175). A paradigm also serves as a basis for the solution of problems. Lincoln and Guba (1985) explain that "our actions in the world...cannot occur without reference to those paradigms: 'As we think, so do we act' " (p. 15). A paradigm shift occurs when there is a profound change in the beliefs, values, and techniques that form the current reality (Gordon, 1992). In order for a paradigm shift to occur, the existing paradigm must "fail to solve important problems that it is intended to address" (Gordon, 1992, p. 63).

Gordon (1992) explains the process. The failure of the old paradigm to solve the problem at hand leads to a crisis for the community, followed by questioning of the old paradigm. Gradually more and more persons begin to question the old paradigm, and debates over it occur. The old paradigm is not rejected, however, until a new paradigm emerges. "The new paradigm may already be in existence or may develop gradually or rapidly in a direct response to the crisis. The new paradigm does not easily replace the old one....[T]here is intense resistance from those still supporting the old one. The paradigm shift is completed when a preponderance of the community has rejected the old paradigm and embraced the new" (Gordon, 1992, p. 63).

Believing and acting on the belief that schooling is an interconnected web of activity that involves everyone in the school as a learner, not just the students, represents a new paradigm of schooling. "In a community of learners, everyone involved is a learner, including teachers and administrators....When a school is a community of learners, the shared system of values and the common agenda of activities center on learning" (Kleine-Kracht, 1993, p. 393). Martel (1993) defines a learning community "as part of a new vision...an organism whose structure, processes, and outcomes are focused on integrating a set of internal and external organizations, institutions, and people whose energy is derived from the total commitment to the enhancement of mental performance of all of us as learners" (p. 22).

Kleine-Kracht (1993), however, believes that "the idea of the school as a community centered on *learning* is not new." Kleine-Kracht reminds us that in Dewey's philosophy of learning and teaching, teachers and students participate together in the learning process and share learning experiences. "The shared work of learning holds the school together as a community and is the primary source of social control" (p. 392).

Through the leadership of four principals, a learning community was created at Southeast Elementary School. The process of this evolution and specifically how these principals contributed to it are described in the following sections.

Historical Context

The school facility was built in 1923. The structure, designed in the boxlike style of the day, was built with high quality features, such as the Louisiana cypress-wood window frames that still endure today. In its early years, the school's mostly Anglo-American elementary (grades K–6) students were sent to school by mothers who remained in the home and by fathers who were white- and blue-collar workers for relatively stable businesses. Life seemed simple, straightforward, and reasonably uncomplicated—as was the school.

A person who had been a student at the school between 1951 and 1955 recalled a well-ordered, pleasant environment with "a heavy emphasis on basic skills but with enrichment activities as well." Students went on field trips to the city's symphony youth performances and to the museum in a nearby park, where an exhibit on Leonardo da Vinci is still remembered. They also toured a large canning factory located near the school.

Each school day started with a general assembly that included the pledge of allegiance to the flag and announcements by the principal. A variety of intramural sports, such as softball, were available to students. Regularly scheduled movies were shown in an auditorium upstairs. Some students performed in choral singing groups or played musical instruments. For an outdoor school-wide festival in May, children wore costumes, and sang and danced.

Two special classes served students who had visual or hearing problems. At times these students attended regular classes.

There was considerable parent interest in supporting the school. Parents, and children too, contributed work hours, for instance, in refinishing student desks at the end of the school year. Students and their families seemed to have a sense of ownership in the school. Years later, former students who had attended the school during the 1950s realized that several of their classmates had moved on to become teachers, suggesting that the school exerted a positive influence on its students.

A Crisis Opportunity

As is characteristic of many urban neighborhoods, the population of the elementary school dwindled as families grew older and residents moved to the suburbs. In the early 1970s, the school became more bureaucratic, more rigidly structured, and more hierarchically dominated by its single administrator, who was the sole decision-maker. Because of ever-decreasing enrollment, the school board discussed closing the school, and this crisis stimulated significant action by a few tenacious parents who did not want to lose their school; they developed a coalition of interested parents who initiated a dialogue with the board to keep the school open. As a result, a decision was made to maintain the school as a magnet school.

With the new concept of magnet school came new administrators and the challenge to generate sufficient student enrollment to stay open. As the community continued to change and as enrollment grew, the student population changed from one that was mostly Anglo-American (85-90%) to one that was mixed. In 1986 there was a racial balance of African-Americans (50 percent) and Anglo-Americans (50 percent); and the school tried to maintain this ratio.

Currently, there is an increasing number of Hispanic students, and a small number of Asians, as the school is becoming increasingly multicultural.

Children First

From the beginning of the school's re-creation, it wasn't just the administrators who demonstrated leadership. "It was the whole feeling that we could make a difference by being positive, and opening up to each other," the faculty reported, "getting away from locked-in traditions"—in current terms, "making a paradigm shift." The teachers, administrators, and school community worked to re-create the school as a place where children would be valued, respected, and cared for. They sought to reinvent the school based on a "children first" philosophy.

The principal led a search for additional teachers to work in an open-classroom environment, with students using the "workshop way," in which the classroom is organized around learning centers and children pursue various tasks more or less independently. School-wide, the work of the staff centered on brainstorming and problem solving to address issues and concerns that they had identified. Faculty Study, Morning Meeting, and other communication structures were developed, and caring among teachers and children was emphasized. A heightened level of professionalism and efficacy evolved among the staff, in addition to their increased sense of accountability for the children's intellectual, social, ethical, and physical development. A strong, confident staff with trust in each other and in children was nurtured by their shared visions. They are now, one and all, a family, as they continue to shape their school for children. But how did the school become what it is?

The School's Development

The underlying philosophy at Southeast Elementary was reflected in the comment of one of its faculty members: "We feel we can trust children to enjoy learning that doesn't have to be defined in one best system. And that joy and laughter and play are all serious business in the elementary school. And so we started..."

The First Principal of the New School: Lucile's Legacy June 1975—August 1976.

As Southeast Elementary's first principal, Lucile, stated, "I think one of the factors for [Southeast Elementary] was that it really and truly was at the end of the rope...the school was going to be taken away from them."

Fearful that the school might be closed, two parents met with the principal of another school that the district had closed, and then re-opened as a magnet school. This principal, who shall be called Lucile, suggested creating a magnet school at Southeast Elementary. "It would require a really massive difference in the educational offering if it were to be viable," she stated. Lucile also favored a child-centered approach, and she brought this idea to the parents. "First and foremost is what is going to most facilitate the child's own learning processes and validate the child," she insisted.

Lucile told the parents she would support them, and she suggested that they go to the district superintendent. She noted that at that time superintendents were secure in their positions, and would, therefore, trust their staffs and their staffs' ideas. Lucile herself credited the parents for their support. "I think anybody dealing with them would sense that these ladies weren't going to go away easily," she stated. Lucile also indicated that the assistant superintendent "was amenable to the idea; he did not tell them 'no it was impossible.' "

The superintendent, however, agreed to support the idea only if Lucile would lead the effort. She agreed, with conditions: she would have assistance (since she would spend part of her time at Southeast Elementary and also remain as the principal at her current school assignment); extensive staff development would be provided for the teachers; and only teachers who were committed to the concept would remain on the staff. With her conditions approved, Lucile agreed to guide the change effort.

The changes at Southeast Elementary began with Lucile's idea that "a true child-centered approach is really a person-centered approach...[b]ecause teachers can't honor children until they have that clear sense within themselves." One aspect of this person-centered approach was giving staff the option of transferring to another school if they did not want to be part of the new program. As Lucile emphasized, "Again, it's the matter of honoring the adult before you can honor the children. We had to honor that staff." Lucile chose the new staff members who would replace those who were leaving, and this was quite unusual at that time. In fact, Lucile reports, "I'm sure I was the first principal that ever interviewed teachers [in the district]. It was a battle to achieve that, but [the district] agreed to that."

Originally, Lucile had wanted a summer-long training program for the teachers, but money was available for only one week. She interviewed and selected some teachers. With some new materials and one week of training with Marian Brooks of City College, in New York City, they began to re-create the school. Lucile described the changes:

> We ungraded the school and set up family grouping right in the beginning. We had quite a few new, wonderful materials. I spent a long, long time with the teachers. And somehow we started. We started meeting in the basement. And I was there every morning.

This was the birth of Morning Meeting. The ungraded classrooms with children of several ages together formed the *family* groupings. Lucile articulated the philosophy underlying this arrangement:

> Children learn by copying other children more than from any other source. We know that from raising our own children....In schools we don't use that because we think that children are going to learn (a) out of the book and (b) from the teacher. They learn from other kids and by doing it themselves.

Another part of Lucile's philosophy was expressed in the continuous opportunities provided for children to develop and demonstrate artistic creativity. Whether through music, drama, dance, or the visual arts, children could share themselves and their richly divergent cultures and backgrounds. In this way, children were honored for their special differences that collectively contributed to the school, their "rainbow school." This was congruent with Lucile's own experiences as an artist—a potter.

Once the school had opened, Lucile went to the district for the assistance she had been promised, and an assistant, Clayton, was hired to be at the school full time. Although he was Lucile's assistant in title, Clayton actually functioned as the principal. As Lucile stated, "He and I talked every day—every day during the first year, and almost every day during the second year. I went there for faculty meetings always, and parent meetings."

Lucile elaborated on her philosophy as a principal:

> Until thinking changes, nothing will change....My total investment of time or money or anything was always in the staff. Before I would buy any kind of equipment or spend money on the building, the money would first be spent on opportunities for the teachers or time for teachers, for all of us. I learned from the beginning that the most important resource that we had was the staff. No amount of money was too much to invest in them.

Lucile arranged for and traveled with Clayton and several teachers to visit schools in England that were using the child-centered approach. She explained the need for this trip:

> It's just like any kind of learning. To read about it falls short; if you go and experience something you can really know what it is we are talking about. I always felt for myself and the other teachers that we had to get into other schools. We had to really go and see and experience and do....So every penny that I could get for teachers or me to travel, we did.
>
> We have to feed ourselves, invest in ourselves, teach ourselves; we have to be the first learners. Unless the teachers are the primary learners in that building, the children don't learn much. Teachers have to have time to do that; they have to have support.

Time was another resource that Lucile provided for the staff, to promote their development. Because the district did not provide additional paid time, the staff began to consider ways to more effectively use the time that they already had available. They realized that time was "a very malleable resource." The staff decided that one way to rearrange time was to teach for longer hours during four days of the week and then to close the school early on Thursdays. They used Thursday afternoons to meet, but never for regular faculty meetings. According to Lucile, "The underlying idea was always it was for some kind of self-development process." To begin that process, the teachers "were bombarded from the first, surrounded as much as possible with good reading, with good materials that we worked on together." Thus Faculty Study began.

Lucile described her role as principal, as follows:

> Another factor [was that the teachers] were pretty clear with the idea of what the school was....I continuously wrote notes and letters to teachers. I went in classrooms; I would come out and write notes supporting every positive thing that I saw....In my job as principal, the teachers were my students in a sense, and I had to do with them everything that I wanted them [the teachers] to do with the students. I had to trust them, and honor them, and support them, and inspire them, and nurture them, and reinforce the good things that I saw them doing. When they began to experience that, I think they began to have

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> more vision and ability to have things like that happening in their classroom....When that starts in the teacher's mind, it doesn't end. It snowballs.

The Second Principal, Clayton: Passing the Potter's Torch

August 1975-1976, Assistant Principal; September 1976—1980, Principal

The faculty remember Clayton as a 27-year-old, recently credentialed guidance counselor who became assistant principal and later principal. "Lucile was the spirit of the school and the embodiment of tenacity and focus on beauty," Clayton said of his mentor. If she was the spirit, he was the heart, all the old-timers agreed, as he set out to develop a happy place where children could learn.

The advertisement had been for someone who could put the school in order. The faculty was divided: some were young and energetic and wanted to create a sense of community and were willing to challenge the status quo; others appeared at work with no energy at all, except for dissension. There were serious student discipline problems. As Clayton noted, these were from "kids who were deciding they were going to run the whole school....My initial job was to do discipline and bring the school to a place where the vision of curriculum and instruction could be implemented."

Clayton kept a journal, beginning with his first meeting at Southeast Elementary School. In this journal he recorded all the problems he faced daily, during his first year. These problems included the following: too many kids in the classrooms, not enough books, no release time for planning, too much rough kids' play, not enough consistency in discipline. He and the staff carefully assessed the existing situation, so they could then fashion an action plan to get from "where we were to where we dreamed we wanted to be collectively."

The faculty was already in place when he got there. As Clayton noted, it included a few people whom "I wondered if I could work with." The faculty had the option either to stay at Southeast Elementary, now a magnet school, and sign on as part of the program and its development, or to go elsewhere. Some people decided they didn't want to go, but they didn't want to stay either.

But there was generally agreement to address the issues. Clayton and the faculty met on Thursday afternoons to work on the problems. Clayton reflected on his thoughts during this period:

> I spent a lot of time identifying how they were hurting—and they were. I thought if I could resolve some of the problems they were having to deal with, they would be willing to come with me to a new vision of schooling.

Every time he and the staff talked about the school, it was within the framework of "How do we create a happy place where children learn?" It started with building a culture, using the first two or three years of energy to create an identifiable vision that could be articulated in terms of culture, curriculum, and kids.

"We used discipline, out of necessity, as a place to start," Clayton reported. The discipline policy was simple: *Be kind and share.* When Clayton dealt with kids and their discipline problems, it was within a framework of kindness. "Is that kind, the way you punched him in the chops?" he would ask students. Clayton elaborated on kindness with the kids until "they were blue in the face."

He and the faculty used Glasser's ten steps of discipline. At Thursday meetings they focused on understanding Glasser's ideas and elaborated on the implications of those ideas for themselves and the children.

Clayton again recalled his feelings during that period:

> I would watch the bus as it approached school. On the bus the kids appeared happy and relatively free of discipline problems. In five steps after leaving the bus, they became sullen. Our question was how can we communicate to kids we want them to be here and that this is a place that's going to be special—that they can say they go to school at this wonderful place.

But in five steps they came to a dingy, smelly place that wasn't inviting physically and "smelled like it was angry." So they cleaned up the physical facility and "put flowers, music and metaphor and poetry and song into the walls." They painted a rainbow on the front of the school.

To no one's surprise, a district administrator appeared to find out who had requested and received permission to "paint this rainbow on the front of the school." After a brief conversation, the district office representative walked back to his car shaking his head—district office didn't share what the staff was trying to do in this place. Clayton noted, "At that time in the school system you got points if you had your paperwork in on time. They thoroughly reprimanded me, and I am still considering where I fit into the system."

Because Southeast Elementary had open enrollment, the challenge to the staff was to create programs and attract families to the school. Staff members went into the community to tell people, "We are building a good school and we need you to be a part of the public schools in this area and join us." A private school in the area competed with Southeast Elementary for pupils, to the point of disseminating inaccurate information about the school. As Clayton recalled, "So I had to confront the school's administrator about the overzealous parents [there]. I suggested that 'you help them to be truthful' or I will tell it in the newspaper."

These issues were not as complex or difficult as the staff's efforts to fashion a belief system that could be articulated in terms of teaching. That took years and was the subject of conversation the whole time that Clayton was at the school. The vision, as he said, was "somewhere outside us and we all held that if we worked hard, the clouds would open and we could see it—however, the vision was bigger than us and it still is."

Clayton was asked what advice he would give, in retrospect, to others who wish to reinvent a school based on new assumptions. He answered that first, you must know yourself and identify your strengths relative to being an administrator; you must find out what gives you energy and never let that go. In addition, he added the following:

> Whenever things get too harried or difficult, then you go into that energy space to rejuvenate yourself. The principalship is a lonely place, so if you know yourself and who you are in terms of the school, and how to 'fill the tank every once in a while,' you don't run the risk of crashing into the rocks.

Second, he said that you must know that time will always be difficult in any process and accept that. Third, he said, "trust that teachers know best about teaching." That is a key, so one should trust them and listen to them and "when they bellow at you, know that they are coming from wanting to have a good school."

It takes four or five years just to work on trust. Clayton reported that the level of trust the teachers had "for me after one year was limited. I had to demonstrate that I would be there and they had to show they would be there in the difficult times. We built trust over the years. This is a personal process that goes on with a faculty."

Clayton reported that he and the staff wanted, within the next four or five years, to have a stronger school academically. But, as he said,

> We knew we couldn't get to that until we met the culture needs. The school was special in that Lucile had an idea of what the school needed to be, so she was on one side saying, 'be innovative,' and the school was on the other side saying, 'traditional.' And we were trying to pick where we were in it.

The school was defining what it should be about and developing its belief system. Every Thursday, Clayton and the staff talked about how to operate the school and how to work with kids. Clayton expressed the hope, which they all shared, that "our being here is going to amount to something in the lives of these kids. And they are going to amount to something in our lives because they are going to teach us something."

Clayton summarized his achievements at the school as follows:

> I was not successful in getting the district to support us. I was unsuccessful in bringing in the external resources that I wanted in the school. We weren't as organized as I would have us to be. But in terms of what I set out to do at [Southeast], I feel successful.

He viewed his relationship with the school and faculty the same way he viewed the universe. That is, "We all have a purpose and when the purpose is fulfilled, it's time to leave." Once his purpose had been accomplished, he had to move on. "I was now treading water," he said.

Clayton wanted to be sure that the new principal would be someone who believed strongly in something and would take the school in a strong direction. He had coffee with "Nina," as she will be called, and asked her, "Can you do this?" Looking straight at him, she said, "Can I do it?! Like who do you think you are, I am going to do it better than you ever did."

The Third Principal: Now It's Nina
January 1981—May 1985

She had been looking for a school consistent with her beliefs, a place where people appreciated the same things she appreciated—that place was Southeast Elementary. "Lucile and Clayton were the creators; they got it started, but it needed a lot to complete it," Nina commented.

Nina's primary goal, she said, "was empowerment; I believed that it was the principal's job to empower teachers, students, and parents both as a means for creating a quality school and as an end in itself." This empowerment meant removing barriers and expanding what had been started under Lucile and Clayton. Nina described her position as follows:

> I put something of an academic focus on and tried to model this at Morning Meeting. I felt like my job was to empower people around me. I did that for my teachers and my kids but I didn't have anybody doing that for me....I didn't get support or backup that I needed from the district or the state.

Nina's strategies to empower teachers included communicating to them that they had the power to set goals and that the school, as a community, would support them in accomplishing those goals. Nina demonstrated her appreciation for teacher's efforts. She also held them responsible for accomplishing their goals. To make teachers feel appreciated and valued, and to know that they were important, Nina encouraged special events, such as a parent-sponsored potluck lunch for teachers on the first day of school. She expressed her strong feelings about supporting the teachers:

> I wanted teachers and others to understand that teachers here were special, as we made sure the kids knew they were special. You'd hear kids say, 'We don't do that at [Southeast].' I wanted teachers to say with pride that, 'We do this at [Southeast]; I teach at [Southeast].'

Nina promoted a number of activities designed to increase school spirit and visibility. The school had a T-shirt design contest, and made new school T-shirts using a kindergartner's design. A "kindergarten coffee" was initiated, where Nina went into the community, spoke to different parent groups, and invited them to the school for a tour given by Southeast's parents. This was an effort at public relations, and "it gave the teachers a chance to show off." All these activities were directed toward the goal of increasing teachers' self-esteem.

Nina took pride in the Arts Connection program. To her, it showed how the school's teachers had gained a sense of empowerment. They planned and wrote a proposal for this program to provide more opportunities for children in the visual arts. To Nina, this was "a testament to the accomplishment of my personal goal at the school, which was not simply to establish an arts program but to establish an atmosphere and a mind-set that would encourage and enable others in the school to establish a program as well....All I did was sign my name."

Another of Nina's goals was to remove administrative procedures that interrupted teachers' instructional activities. She expressed her position as follows:

> My message to teachers was, 'You are professionals. I value you for your work with students. I don't want you to have to spend any more energy on other tasks than necessary. I will not dump on you work which we can accomplish in the office unless absolutely necessary.'

Nina's involved parents, who contributed their time, and took responsibility for projects at the school. In addition, she developed structures for decision making and for professional development for teachers. These structures provided more efficient management of tasks, and meant that teachers were less burdened with administrative duties.

One of the first things Nina did was survey parents to solicit their suggestions, comments, and concerns. She did this in concert with the management team that she started, to help relieve teachers of time-consuming administrative tasks that took time away from teaching. The first management team consisted of the lower- and upper-grade chairpersons, the special education chairperson, a union representative, two parents, and a community representative. (A Tulane University professor of education who had children in the city's public schools was part of the team and made a significant contribution.)

As noted, the management team was designed to relieve teachers of administrative concerns, and therefore reinforced "the concept of teacher as professional educator as opposed to the concept of teacher as baby sitter or paper-pusher." Since the management team made decisions about how the school would operate, Faculty Study time did not have to be used for this purpose, and it became a time for meeting teachers' needs for professional development. The management team represented the teachers, but was a smaller group (than the whole faculty) that would be more efficient in soliciting information and making decisions that their colleagues could support.

Nina encouraged anything that could be done to help teachers eliminate tasks that took their time and detracted from teaching. She took some credit for computerizing Form 10, the daily attendance report required by the district. She developed a weekly faculty bulletin to eliminate time spent on administrative items at faculty meetings, and to highlight activities she wanted to foster at the school. In addition, she included in the bulletin, celebrations and praises for the positive efforts of children and teachers, making sure that over time she mentioned something about each teacher.

Nina sought to empower parents as well as teachers. She did this by involving them more in the school. For example, she changed the process of collecting children's lunch money. Previously, teachers were burdened with this task. At Nina's suggestions, the parents took over this chore. The faculty credited her with eliminating this "abomination," but Nina credited the parents. The result of this change was twofold: the parents became more involved in the school, and the teachers were relieved of yet another time-consuming task. Improving the parents' bulletin also helped to involve parents. The bulletin was upgraded with pictures and a logo, nicely printed and mailed out to parents, local businesses, and to community people monthly.

Under Nina's administration, a new report card was designed that was both easy to deal with administratively, and reflected what the school was trying to accomplish with the students. Because report cards are a communication device between the school and the parents that "every parent reads," Nina focused attention on the content of every child's report card, making comments to model the type of comments she felt teachers should include. She also made report card comments "the focus of my weekly bulletin to teachers. I compared positive comments with negative ones, and generally set standards for the way the cards should be completed. I included a handout with suggested ways of communicating difficult messages to parents in a positive manner." The results of these changes were "very positive."

The form of the report card was also changed to prevent duplication of effort by teachers in recording grades on permanent records and to more "adequately reflect the skills that were being taught at each level." Nina did not make these changes alone, however. As Nina described the process, teachers were highly involved in the "many lengthy and loud discussions of curriculum, child development, grade levels, etc. Eventually we produced a new report card that reflected our curriculum, our expectations for our children, and it was easier to complete in the bargain."

Another idea put into practice had to do with gathering information about junior high schools. Different junior high principals came to parent meetings and spoke about their schools. The student council at Southeast Elementary conducted these presentations to inform Southeast's parents and students about grades and other requirements of the various schools. As Nina stated, "I wanted students to know they had a choice about what they could do with their lives, the direction they could take, the schools they could choose, etc."

Nina's tenure at Southeast Elementary ended after she was injured while attending a picnic with the students and faculty. This set up another transition period and began the selection process for a new administrator for the school.

The Fourth and Current Principal: Wayne's Way
Fall 1985—Present

Southeast's fourth principal, whom we shall call Wayne, expressed his understanding of his predecessors' roles and philosophies:

> The two principals who preceded me had a real commitment to share decision making and move teachers toward ownership in what was going on in the school, so when I came it was clearly understood when I interviewed for the position that was the way business was done at [Southeast].

He assumed the responsibilities of the principal. But, as he stated, "there have been few occasions when the management team and teachers moved toward a decision I didn't support." When serious decisions are to be made, they are made through the team, with teachers and parents involved. Also included on the management team was the school's student council president, who generally added a refreshing perspective.

The school's ranking teacher filled in after Nina's injury. Many faculty and parents preferred that this teacher step into the principalship, but she did not have the appropriate credentials as established by district policy. Thus, Wayne came in as acting principal, not knowing when or if Nina would return. During this period there was some faculty and parent anger at the school, not only about the trauma of Nina's injury but also about the district's refusal to make an exception to the usual principal-selection process. Faculty felt that "[Southeast] is different and we do things our own way; we pilot new ideas and this should be one of them." They did not object to Wayne personally, but to the system. In addition to this controversy, there was some concern about Wayne's having previously been the assistant principal at a middle school. People wondered, "Is he going to try to come in and change everything?"

Wayne came with the attitude that he would maintain things and, if possible, bring new ideas into the school. He did make some changes in the way money was handled and in other administrative procedures, for which "we could get into a whole lot of trouble if we didn't follow established guidelines." But, as he said, the management team was "my guide as well as my colleagues, and that is the beauty of having that kind of background, experience, knowledge, leadership and ownership within a school" in such a transition period. Wayne elaborated:

> If you are not intimidated by that, then you put your faith in people you work with, and you can get oriented very quickly and get a great deal accomplished, and not feel lost, as many new principals do when they come in.

Typically there is not a support group for new principals. But, as Wayne said, "the management team was my support group."

"One of the things my predecessor was very good at but that is a weak area of mine was a weekly...*Day to Day* bulletin for teachers," said Wayne. He instead issued a *[Southeast] Update,* as needed—it could be once a week, twice a week, or even once a month. Because of the Thursday meeting time, which was still scheduled, he felt that there was considerable opportunity for faculty discussion.

One of the things Wayne and the faculty did was look at California Achievement Test (CAT) data to identify areas of instruction that Southeast students had not mastered. Specific areas that warranted school-wide focus were reading vocabulary skills and reading for content. As Wayne expressed it, "One of our goals is to move all our kids up, but we have looked at the kids in the bottom quartile and have been successful in moving them into the second quartile." Whole-language instruction was the instructional method of choice for the faculty, who grouped and regrouped students within their classrooms, to address their individual strengths and weaknesses.

When a teachers' strike led to considerable tension among the faculty, it was resolved through "circle-table" discussion that was beneficial to both Wayne and the faculty. Wayne described the process they used:

> We sat and talked and leveled with each other about how we were feeling about what was going on. It was hard for everyone to deal with...although people feel like they can give me feedback in a group setting, or individually.

Wayne solicited feedback on some occasions, but at other times "the faculty pulls me into discussion, saying, 'We need to talk to you about these things'." At other times he did the pulling when he got mixed messages from a number of people. In such instances they had a series of meetings where they talked about concerns, and they were "very blunt and deal with emotional kinds of things where people have a hard time saying what they are really feeling...but we work our way through it."

The group employed this kind of catharsis on a regular basis, sometimes with a facilitator. Wayne described the process:

> Where we've made the greatest progress is sitting down as a faculty with an agenda, laying our cards on the table, and giving each other explanations about why and how things happen...we need more time to do this unstructured type of discussion....It's like a family where people's feelings get hurt and where animosities and concerns build up, and you need a vehicle to let some of that out and talk about it and get it

> out on the table as much as you can. Time is always a factor, always so hard to deal with.

Faculty members addressed each other and Wayne by first names. They viewed themselves as a family and, as Wayne stated, "if you want to perpetuate a feeling of family, then everybody calls everybody by their first name and I have always been very comfortable with that." In classrooms, of course, they addressed each other as "Mr." or "Mrs.," but it was not unusual for first names to be used in the presence of children, "and the kids don't blink an eye because what we are doing is modeling behavior for the kids and it's perfectly natural for two adults to call each other by their first name."

Another important aspect of the school was Morning Meeting, which was used to set the family tone and start the day together. It was a special time, with all the children sitting on the basement floor, a time for sharing and honoring kids. Wayne described Morning Meeting as follows:

> We have one of the best audiences you will ever find 'cause we practice it every day. The kids have learned how to focus and how to listen, as kids come up to read a poem they have written. This time of year first-graders are finishing their first reader, so they read a bit to us...if they go on a field trip, kids will come up and talk about it...they report on projects...the kindergartners came yesterday with hand puppets they had made and sang a song, so everyone got to clap for the kindergartners.

Wayne and the faculty were interested in the research study of their school as a means of documenting the school's development. He expressed his feelings about this:

> It is real important to us to have an impartial researcher come in and help us understand what it is that we have done to get where we are...It has to do with our self-esteem, morale in keeping ourselves going and being proud of who we are....We really do think we are special and different and we want that to be documented....Further, we want to continue to keep ourselves focused on where we need to be going....The kinds of information you can give us about where we are will help us in formulating goals and setting priorities....It's nice to have someone who can see the forest for the trees and give us some insight into where we are so that will help us decide where we want to go.

A former staff person expressed the idea similarly:

> A belief of mine is that if you are not being born, you are dying; you must re-create life or it is going to leave you. The faculty...needs to be challenged to create a new tomorrow for themselves. They are unhappy with a sort of idealized impression of what the past was and don't remember how miserable some of those days were. They lean back into the past and say, 'Boy, we used to be this.' We really weren't that; we were chasing every day, with an unbelievable amount of tenacity, toward an evolving vision of where to go.

They were going toward the use of technology and a focus on curriculum. Teachers reported that Wayne brought these emphases to the school. His area of specialization and preparation was curriculum, and his tenure as assistant principal at a middle school that received some of the Southeast Elementary students shaped his concerns that students needed to be ready to matriculate to middle school.

In May 1992, the staff identified two goals for the coming school year: (1) implementing the Chapter 1 proposal to which they had all contributed (and which included the acquisition of a substantial number of computers and software for use by Chapter 1 students and all others), and (2) exploring and adopting a curriculum to which they could all subscribe. No one could remember exactly when the staff began thinking they needed a consistent curriculum that they could all use. They expressed a concern that perhaps not every child was receiving an adequate and appropriate set of learning opportunities; thus they saw a "need to coordinate our curriculum."

The faculty had tried in an earlier year to develop a mathematics curriculum "from scratch." However, they found it to be a massive job, and wondered how strong this curriculum really was. Therefore, they were interested in searching for an existing curriculum that they could adopt. They hoped to find a core curriculum that would foster their vision of multiculturalism: As Wayne stated, "The curriculum is a way to get our vision strengthened....The school has always been diverse and we want to perpetuate that."

At a national conference of the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD), one of the teachers learned about a particular curriculum. She obtained materials, and shared them with Wayne and the management team. Wayne reported that early concerns about this curriculum focused on its less-than-ideal sensitivity to the school's vision of multicultural issues.

Wayne and this key teacher met several times to plan how to share information with the staff and support them in the process of exploring this curriculum and making a decision about its use at Southeast. An initial activity was to revisit the school's mission and reiterate its operating principles, and then look at the curriculum in light of the school's mission and principles. Wayne led the staff in reviewing their vision statement and in generating their ideas and beliefs about how it "played out" in the school and the classrooms. He summarized these ideas and wrote them down for later distribution.

Meanwhile, Wayne and the key teacher copied and distributed curriculum materials for the faculty's study. These two people were identified by everyone as the leading facilitators of the effort. They met in individual, small- and large-group informal conversations with faculty to consider the curriculum and their use of it. Wayne cautioned them to take time before committing to the curriculum or before becoming too frustrated.

Guided by Wayne and a second teacher facilitator, the faculty met to do a force-field analysis of the benefits and disadvantages of the curriculum in relationship to their vision for the school. There was dissonance between what they thought the curriculum would be and what they actually found it to be. They saw the curriculum as Eurocentric, and therefore expected to add multicultural components to compensate for this disadvantage.

Continuing their study, they met again to work with the curriculum and plan a thematic unit. This was done, as Wayne said, "so teachers could get their feet wet and get a real sense of how the curriculum would work, the materials needed to start, and areas of need for in-service." They also planned how to use a consultant (a teacher in another state who had used the curriculum). Wayne submitted a proposal for ten days of in-service training in June, to do detailed work with the curriculum.

Wayne encouraged staff to go to a national conference focusing on the curriculum, on schools that were using it, and on adaptations that these schools had made to it. Wayne and 16 teachers flew to the two-day out-of-state conference at their own expense, to attend general and breakout sessions related to their teaching assignments. Twice daily Wayne gathered teachers around the pool to discuss their new knowledge and how to share this knowledge with their colleagues at home. The "conference-goers" found their experience so rewarding that they suggested the whole faculty attend a conference together as part of their learning and development activities for the next year.

At various times in the curriculum-search process Wayne was seen by various observers as "pushing" and at other times as showing patience and reassuring the staff that he was not unequivocally "for" this curriculum. At one point, facing discouragement and uneasiness, he asked, "Do you really want to do this?" "Yes," they said, "it's just that it's going to be a lot of work and we all need to commit to it." They did.

Researchers' Reflections

Sergiovanni (1992) states that "The idea of a school as a learning community suggests a kind of connectedness among members that resembles what is found in a family, a neighborhood, or some other closely knit group, where bonds tend to be familial or even sacred" (p. 47). Westheimer and Kahne (1993) view "community as a process marked by interaction and deliberation among individuals who share interests and commitment to common goals....Meaningful interactions among members lead to a sense of shared responsibility for both the process and its outcomes. Reflection is encouraged, and dissent is honored. Such communities grow out of shared experiences" (p. 325). Schools as learning communities provide norms that guide behavior and answer such questions as, "What are we doing? Why are we doing this? and How might we do things better?"

Kruse and Louis (1993) characterize a "school-based professional community" as one where teachers engage in reflective dialogue, where there is de-privatization of practice, collective focus on student learning, collaboration, and shared norms and values. Kruse and Louis list several conditions that are necessary for the creation of strong professional communities: time to meet and talk, physical proximity, interdependent teaching roles, communication structures, teacher empowerment, and school autonomy. They also note that several pre-conditions are required: openness to improvement, trust and respect, a base of skills, and supportive leadership.

These characteristics and conditions parallel those that Boyd (*School Context: Bridge or Barrier to Change?*, 1992) found in a review of the literature regarding the factors of context that facilitate or impede change, particularly change that targets improvement of schools for at-risk students. Boyd divided these factors into two categories, the ecology and the culture. The ecology includes resources, physical arrangements, scheduling patterns, school size, demographic shifts, working conditions, and local, state, and federal policies.

The culture was conceptualized as (1) attitudes and beliefs held by those in the school and in the external community, (2) norms, and (3) relationships. The factors found to facilitate change were synthesized as 17 indicators (Boyd, Creating a Context for Change, 1992). Boyd and Hord arranged the indicators around four functions of a context conducive to change (see Table 1).

As Senge (1990) and others suggest, learning and change are two sides of the same coin. Beckhard and Pritchard (1992) believe that "learning while doing" is "probably the most important single process in effective change" (p. 9). "Learning" is a word that has lost its meaning in many senses, according to Senge. "Real learning gets to the heart of what it means to be human. Through learning we re-create ourselves. Through learning we become able to do something we never were able to do....[A] learning organization is an organization that is continually expanding its capacity to create its future" (Senge, 1990, p. 14). This learning process should be a process of learning while doing, according to Beckhard and Pritchard (1992).

Table 1

Four Functions and Related Indicators of a Context Conducive to Change

Functions	**Indicators**
Reducing Isolation	Schedules and structures that reduce isolation Policies that foster collaboration Policies that provide effective communication Collegial relationships among teachers A sense of community in the school
Increasing Staff Capacity	Policies that provide greater autonomy Policies that provide staff development Availability of resources Norm of involvement in decision making
Providing a Caring, Productive Environment	Positive teacher attitudes toward schooling, students, and change Students' heightened interest and engagement with learning Positive, caring student-teacher-administrator relationships Supportive community attitudes Parents and community members as partners and allies
Promoting Increased Quality	Norm of continuous critical inquiry Norm of continuous improvement Widely shared vision or sense of purpose

One characteristic of a true "learning organization" is that its norms encourage innovation. Argyris and Schon (1987, cited in Beckhard and Pritchard) note that "organizational learning involves the detection and correction of errors" (p. 15). Because learning and change are so closely linked, it is proposed that a context conducive to change (as described by the 17 indicators above) is also characteristic of a "learning community."

Sergiovanni (1992) maintains that the norms of a school as a "learning community" may substitute for leadership for the following reason:

> [they can] provide teachers and others who work in schools with the kind of inspiration, meaning, and motivation that come from within....There is less need for principals and superintendents to motivate people from the outside by bartering psychological and physical need fulfillment in exchange for compliance" (p. 44).

The authors of this paper propose that a "learning community" performs four functions essential to change and school improvement (Table 1). A learning community reduces isolation, increases staff capacity, provides a caring, productive environment, and promotes increased quality. Leadership, however, is essential for the creation of a "learning community." Beckhard and Pritchard (1992) note that "a learning mode occurs only when an organization's top leaders understand the process, see learning as something to be valued, and are prepared to personally commit themselves to it" (p. 14).

The Leader's Role in Creating a Culture

"It is characteristic for any culture to regulate the behavior of its members by demanding conformity to standards acceptable to the community" (Prince, 1989, p. 4). The culture of a school is no less demanding. Sergiovanni (1992) notes that "the images of the learning community suggest a very different kind of leadership practice" (p. 46). Several writers have discussed what leaders might do to shape the culture of an organization or school. This section summarizes the findings of these writers regarding the influence that leaders exert in shaping culture and in the creation of "learning communities."

From his study of business organizations, Schein (1989) suggests that there are both primary and secondary mechanisms for shaping the culture of an organization. Primary mechanisms include what the organization's leaders pay attention to, measure, and control; their reactions to critical events and crises within the organization; their role modeling, coaching, and teaching; the criteria they use to allocate rewards and status; and the criteria they use for recruiting, selecting, promoting, and isolating staff.

Secondary mechanisms used to shape the culture, according to Schein, include the organization's design and structure; organizational systems and procedures; design of the physical space, facades, and buildings; stories, legends, myths, and parables about important events and people; and formal statements of organizational philosophy, creeds, and charters. Schein designates these as secondary mechanisms because, to have an effect, they must be consistent with the primary mechanisms.

Schein's findings in the corporate world have been confirmed by researchers studying school culture. Principals who want to change school culture first seek to understand the existing system (Patterson, 1993; Deal and Peterson, 1990). They identify the norms, values, and beliefs that they want to reinforce, as well as those that they want to change. They may also use measures of climate or culture to gather information about the existing culture of the school (Mahaffy, 1988).

If the desired changes are dramatic, school leaders make an explicit commitment and communicate it to others (Deal and Peterson, 1990). Leaders strengthen the desired school culture by engaging in a process with the entire staff to clarify and prioritize a set of shared goals for school improvement initiatives (Deal and Peterson, 1990; Leithwood and Jantzi, 1990). Leaders begin by talking about the importance of developing a common goal or vision at faculty meetings, informal discussions, and other appropriate forums. The development of norms of collegiality and collaboration is given priority as part of the school's vision (Mahaffy, 1988).

One important aspect of school culture is the informal network that controls communication in the school. School leaders can reveal this network by noting who talks and writes to whom, when, why, and what responses they get (Deal, 1985). Constant communication and questioning of current practice in light of how to improve the school is used to establish a norm of continuous improvement (Staessens, 1991). Informal messages communicated during personal meetings between the leader and staff members are quite powerful as well (Schein, 1989). Sergiovanni (1992) reports that it is this informal network that provides peer pressure to support new norms.

By consistently modeling, coaching, attending to detail, observing ceremonies, rituals, and traditions, and telling stories that identify heroes and heroines who support the school's mission, school leaders reinforce the core values and norms of the school (Deal and Peterson, 1990; Staessens, 1991). Principals in a study by Leithwood and Jantzi (1990) engaged in direct and frequent communication about the desired cultural norms. They visited, informed, persuaded, negotiated, wrote, discussed, and counseled with teachers to communicate the values of the culture. What principals give attention to, talk about, and reinforce or support, as they tour their buildings or attend school activities, influences teachers' attitudes and behaviors (Peterson, 1988). "The norming behavior of the principal...set[s] a standard for respect of others in the school" (Dickerson, 1992, p. 9). In addition, the principal articulates the vision for the school through his or her own modeling.

Peterson (1988) suggests that there are several actions that principals take to promote a particular culture in their schools, with their greatest influence lying in their power to recruit, select, promote, and demote staff members. School leaders who shape culture recruit teachers and staff who share their view of the mission of the school and whose values and beliefs are consistent with those being established (Deal and Peterson, 1990). Leithwood and Jantzi (1990) found that in addition to hiring teachers who have an established commitment to the school's purposes, principals also give teachers the option to transfer to other schools if they choose not to devote themselves to those purposes. And by hiring and retaining teachers who highly value experimentation in their classroom, principals can create an atmosphere conducive to innovation (Peterson, 1988).

The establishment of collaborative decision-making procedures has been found to contribute to goal clarification (Leithwood and Jantzi, 1990). School leadership teams are established and invite participation from other faculty in order to use the process as a consensus-building activity (Mahaffy, 1988). Staessens (1991) found that when the leader establishes staff meetings, systematic discussions with teacher colleagues, a steering committee, and various working groups, a support network for collaboration is formed.

Leaders who shape the school's culture provide structures to enable professional exchange among teachers by designating time and space for such collaboration (Staessens, 1991). By creating opportunities for interaction among teachers—such as common planning time, staff retreats, staff presenting workshops to other staff, teachers visiting other teachers' classes, and working committees assigned to specific tasks—school leaders reduce teacher isolation (Leithwood and Jantzi, 1990). The allocation of resources and the visibility of school improvement as a topic on meeting agendas are bureaucratic structures that may be used to support cultural change (Leithwood and Jantzi, 1990; Mahaffy, 1988). In a case study of one secondary school's restructuring effort, Dickerson (1992) found that such actions as changing the schedule from six 55-minute classes each day to eight 90-minute classes over two days and reducing student-teacher ratios influenced other aspects of the school.

Staff development may be used to facilitate the transition from isolation and independence to collaboration and interdependence by acknowledging that teachers can learn from colleagues (Mahaffy, 1988). In Leithwood and Jantzi's study (1990), principals modeled the importance of staff development by personally providing workshops, assisting teachers in their classrooms, attending in-service sessions with staff, informing staff of in-service opportunities and encouraging participation, and sharing information from conferences or workshops. Delegating power to staff was also viewed as an opportunity for teachers to learn. Regular faculty meetings that focus on teaching and learning, access to research information by the leadership team, and working with the staff to develop a colleague coaching system in the school are three techniques for providing staff development (Mahaffy, 1988). Staff development sessions that are presented by staff members for one another were encouraged.

In addition to providing development opportunities for the staff, principals who shape the school's culture attend to their own professional development. They stay abreast of innovations and promote in-service programs and seminars that sensitize the staff to the importance of such innovations, thus shaping the culture (Peterson, 1988). Staessens (1991) described leaders of a culture for change as being well-informed and well-read. They make sure that help or answers are provided when teachers encounter problems. Coaching the staff about what is acceptable practice as they are engaged in their work is another tool used to shape the culture (Schein, 1989).

Researchers have also found that principals who create a culture for change in their schools confront resistance, rather than avoiding or withdrawing from it. They use conflicts as opportunities to promote interaction and discussion about the vision of the school (Deal and Peterson, 1990; Staessens, 1991). Furthermore, principals may provide staff development on conflict resolution and other team-building skills (Mahaffy, 1988).

These principals recognize and celebrate successes (both large and small) as often as possible (Deal and Peterson, 1990). To celebrate and publicly recognize the work of staff and students who have contributed to school improvement efforts, principals in the study by Leithwood and Jantzi (1990) wrote individual notes to staff expressing appreciation for special or personal efforts. Recognition and celebration of faculty accomplishments is provided at individual, group, and whole-staff levels (Mahaffy, 1988). Principals also reward teachers for their independent efforts by selecting such teachers for special or desirable assignments or by helping them get funding for their projects, large or small (Peterson, 1988). Consistently providing rewards for the behavior that leaders want staff to adopt signals in a powerful way what the leaders value (Schein, 1989).

By "being where the action is," principals gain many opportunities to shape the culture in their schools (Peterson, 1988). Keeping track of what's going on and regularly re-evaluating the extent to which students, teachers, parents, and the community share a vision of the school's mission and the degree to which cultural patterns are mutually reinforcing and supporting that mission are important tasks for principals who seek to shape the culture (Deal and Peterson, 1990). According to Mahaffy (1988), school leaders should be sure they are aware of all the activity going on in the school in order to respond to the needs of the staff.

A school's culture is shaped by an accumulation of hundreds of actions—no single one is seen as critical. In combination, however, these actions profoundly affect the school's context for change (Peterson, 1988). The principal's role in shaping school culture has been described above. What is less well-known is how a principal develops a *learning community culture* consistent with the seventeen indicators noted in Table 1.

The Example of Southeast Elementary

A review of the information on Southeast Elementary—interviews with principals, teachers, other school staff, community people (including the university professor discussed earlier), and professional colleagues associated with the school, as well as written documents and artifacts—brings to light a few more observations and lessons learned:

1. A crisis precipitated an opportunity, and a paradigm shift resulted. In following the steps outlined by Kuhn (1970), we can identify the stages:
    - The model upon which the school was operating did not succeed in holding sufficient pupil attendance, and the school was threatened with closure. A few energetic parents explored options. They talked with each other. They talked with Lucile to get her advice. They met with the school board to request a reprieve and a chance to develop a new paradigm. They developed a core group of parents for action.
    - The new paradigm was introduced, but many teachers held on to the old—they didn't want to leave the school, but they didn't want to embrace the new model either.
    - With a great deal of struggle and tenacity, the early administrators clung to a vision, to their hopes, and to the few believers.
    - In time the chorus changed its tune, and everyone began to sing from the same page, to the same melody—in harmony. The new paradigm was accepted, respected, and valued.
    - A paradigm shift had occurred.
2. Initially this school was not "into" school improvement. It was focused on "regeneration," a paradigm shift (Robert Wimpelberg, personal communication, 1992)—a rebirth or reformulation of its purpose and

procedures—and had been forced into it by events and economic and sociological movements of the day.

3. Although the community connections were not well articulated, it appeared the school had its roots in the community, symbolized by the school's "community association." In an earlier, less mobile time, the business community held meetings at the school. When the building was less crowded, moms had their gatherings in part of the unused space. So when the school needed increased enrollment, the principal, staff, and parents went out to the community to solicit interest and participation—to persuade them to place their children in the school. The school's community association paid the registration fees for teachers to attend the curriculum conference, where they studied its potential (while teachers each paid for their travel and hotel accommodations). There had been a sometimes subtle but symbiotic relationship between the community and school over the years that contributed to the school's success.
4. The school was blessed with a series of talented and unique principals, each apparently the right person at the right time. Clayton described Southeast's first principal, Lucile, as the "embodiment of tenacity and beauty." How tenaciously she clung to and fought for the vision of a child-centered school! Her vision required that children be honored and respected for who they were and what they brought of themselves to school. Furthermore, Lucile's vision included children who respected and appreciated themselves, who had high self-esteem and self-regard. To this end, Lucile, the artist, encouraged teachers to use the visual and performing arts to provide children with opportunities for self-expression that would lead to feelings of self-worth. The children's projects made a drab building a nicer and more attractive place to spend the day.

Whereas Lucile was the "quiet but forceful center of things," teachers observed that Clayton was the "energymeister," cheerleading and bringing about bonding of faculty and children. As one teacher said, "He's a people person, going around talking with and touching everyone, connecting to them and connecting them with each other." As part of his interactions with teachers, he would spontaneously suggest an afternoon volleyball game with the faculty, or encourage everyone to meet at the end of Friday afternoon for a beverage at the neighborhood gathering place. Teachers without fail acknowledged his energy and the way he used it to get the school turned around with a well-articulated and consistently enforced discipline process. Teachers studied the process together in the early days of Faculty Study, and through this activity they bonded together around a common goal.

Nina's goals for the school included the achievement of increased teacher self-esteem and the empowerment of teachers, parents, and students. She promoted activities with parents that would recognize and show appreciation for teachers. Nina's goals also included freeing teachers to devote their attention to professional development and innovative practices for children—practices they had been empowered to develop themselves. She was an "organizer, businesslike, a structural leader, managing the resources." By proactively streamlining procedures and processes, she was able to reduce administrative trivia and other distractions.

Each succeeding principal maintained the evolving culture—its values, beliefs, and operations—and added to it. Such was the case with Wayne, the current principal. Clayton had commented that, some years earlier, the staff wanted to think about academics, but first they needed to tend to the culture. Teachers reported that Wayne responded to that need. Because of his own expertise in curriculum, he promoted an interest in looking critically at the academic program. Teachers credited him with increasing the stress on academics through his introduction of computer hardware and software. His concern for academic preparedness may have stemmed from his previous position as assistant principal of a middle school that received some of Southeast Elementary's students. The innovative features that characterized Southeast Elementary earlier remained during Wayne's administration; they became institutionalized. Morning Meeting, for example, took place daily, "We meet as a family to start the day," explained Wayne. "It is a time when we can honor our students and applaud and celebrate their accomplishments."

In succession, all four of these principals—the vision person, the people person, the organization person, and the academic person—added important dimensions to the school. None of it could have happened as it did (with a widely held vision and shared decision making) without the structures and schedules that permitted the conversation to develop in the first place: Morning Meeting, where everyone in the school shared the first twenty minutes of the day; and Faculty Study, where faculty as a "learning community" continued to learn, grow, and improve their work with children.

Adoption and Implementation of Change

Southeast Elementary's story of exploration and adoption of a new school-wide curriculum is a real-school example of adoption and implementation. It is worth reviewing the steps in the two processes of adoption and implementation at Southeast Elementary during Wayne's term of leadership.

Adoption

For several years, the staff had wanted a school-wide curriculum in order to assure the access of all students to a desired knowledge-base, and to avoid redundancies and overlaps as well as gaps in the continuum of students' educational experiences. In May 1992, the staff identified, as a goal for the next school year, the exploration of a curriculum to which they could all subscribe. Thus, they were delighted when a teacher-leader found, at an ASCD conference, the Core Knowledge Curriculum produced by E.D. Hirsch, Jr.

They had planned to search for a curriculum that they expected to use for 50 percent of their instruction, thereby reserving 50 percent for their own supplementary material based on children's needs and the unique demands of various classes. They expected to find embedded, or to embed, in this curriculum their district's Essential Learner Outcomes in concert with the state's curriculum guidelines. In addition, they wanted a curriculum that would foster their vision of multiculturalism.

After "Teacher K," the teacher-leader, learned about the Core Curriculum, she shared Hirsch's book with the principal, the management team, and other teachers to determine their initial interest. During the fall of 1992, the principal and Teacher K met several times to plan and subsequently to share information with all teachers and to support them in their exploration and decision making about the curriculum.

In January 1993, a session was conducted with the teachers to review the operating principles that the school believed in and lived by, whereby the school's mission/vision could be realized (see Figure 1). Subsequent to this meeting, each teacher was given grade-level materials. including the scope and sequence of the content to be taught. The principal had ordered these items from the Core Knowledge Foundation. The teachers reviewed the materials in light of the staff's beliefs and operating principles, and then met together to voice their opinions. After this meeting, the principal and Teacher K met with individuals and had informal small- and large-group conversations with staff, to consider the curriculum and their use of it.

In March, the total faculty sat down together at Faculty Study to examine the curriculum materials and to do a force-field analysis, looking at the benefits and threats of the curriculum to the enhancement of the school's mission (see Figure 2). They met again in March for a half-day session to plan a thematic unit so that they could really get into the curriculum and make sense of what it stood for. They used a consultant (a teacher from another state who used the curriculum) to learn more about the curriculum. In addition, the principal submitted a proposal for ten days of in-service in June, to do detailed work with the curriculum if they so decided.

The annual conference on the Core Knowledge Curriculum was scheduled for May, in another state. The principal encouraged the staff to attend this conference by announcing it at this meeting and by visiting individually with staff to ensure that a representative group of the faculty might attend (teachers of all ages, experience, and racial groups). The teachers expressed interest in going to the conference to talk to other users, and to learn how other schools had adapted the curriculum to meet their needs.

In May, half the faculty flew to the conference, attending both general and break-out sessions and meeting twice a day with the principal to share information, discuss what they had learned at the conference, and to make plans for sharing with their colleagues at home. A meeting for sharing was conducted later in May with all staff.

For two days in June, after the students had been dismissed for the summer, the faculty met on a voluntary basis. Their proposal for the summer in-service was not funded. Using a consensus-building approach for deciding whether to adopt the curriculum and make adaptations, staff committed these work days to preparing school-wide units, by grade level, for the next school year.

From Southeast Elementary, one learns one way to go about the adoption process. One also learns that extensive time was required for the process of adoption. In addition to time, the principal provided material and human resources to the staff for their exploration activities. The most telling aspect of the staff's experience with adoption was their continued reference to the mission and vision they held for their students and the school. The curriculum adoption process began with the staff articulating their vision and operating principles. Their shared understanding of what the school should be, what it should do, and what it should look like was the standard against which they measured their proposals for change and predicted how the adoption of such a change would fit with their dreams for the school.

Figure 1

Operating Principles

January 21, 1993

Child-Centered
-Caring for children
-What is best for the child?
-Fostering confidence within our student's abilities
-Student/Teacher/Student involvement
-Structure without regimentation
-Focus on the individual

Improving Children's Self-Esteem
-Building pride in our students
-Discipline achieved through desire for love and approval, not fear
-Responsible learners
-Feeling good about themselves
-Fostering self-esteem

Diversity
-Cooperation among different cultures/races
-Differences are allowed to be expressed
-Differences and diversities treating each other with respect/accepting
-Colorful
-Respect for each other
-Multiculturalism

Collegiality

-Teachers helping each other
-Promotes cooperative teaching
-Peer support

Caring Faculty
-Caring teachers
-Caring parents
-Giving warm fuzzies
-Teacher's enthusiasm
-Going the extra step to make the school the best
-Listening to kids
-Stop to notice the child
-Listen more than teach

Value Core:

Inclusion

Loving

Patience

Fairness

Understanding

Family Oriented
-Family/Loving/Genuiune/Putting child first
-Responsible parents
-Genuiune family atmosphere
-Family atmosphere: caring/sharing/loving

Community Investment
-Involvement
-Community action
-Community awareness

Enrichment and Creative Expression
-Individual creativity is encouraged and reinforced
-Involvement with the arts
-Providing an environment that fosters expression: verbal/creative/nonverbal

Empowerment and Professionalism
-Quality leadership
-Model teachers
-Shared decison making
-Commitment to education, children, parents, professional educators
-Innovative
-Open minded faculty

Figure 1

Figure 2

Core Knowledge Curriculum-School Faculty Discussion

March 4, 1993

Benefits

Continuity
-Continuity with curriculum from grade level to grade level
-Consistency and continuity of curriculum
-Unity, clarity, simplicity across school curriculum

Sense of Accomplishment
-Sense of accomplishment (students, teachers, & parents)
-Helps teachers & parents to know what to expect from year to year

Strong Foundation
-Strong foundation
-Mastery of knowledge
-Serves as building blocks!

Potential for Well-Rounded Exposure
Well rounded students – broader sense of the world – fairness
Well rounded teachers and students

Threats

How do we do it?
What does it look like?

Euro-Centric
Euro-centric
-South & Central American cultures neglected
-Displace "real" learning

Validity
-How valid are the standards to be tested?
-Reliance on curriculum that's not field-tested on total population

Lack of Resources
-Lack of understanding or resources (subject knowledge, material, human resources)
-Not having the materials necessary (where will we get them? who will pay for them?)

Individual Needs Lost
-Are individual/class needs being met?
-A lack of individualized instruction
-Focus on curriculum at expense of students

Philosophical Differences
-Is "this" what we want to teach?
-Some teachers are philosophically opposed to the program
-Core idea not fully realized

Time Management
-Time consuming to plan, plan, plan, then teach
Time for planning
How to teach Core in split class

Implementation

Adoption of the Core Knowledge Curriculum, described above, was studied by the researchers while the process was underway. The implementation process described below, however, applied primarily to a discipline strategy called Rainbow Connection and was reported in retrospect by the principal and several teachers during the first interviews conducted at the school. A modest amount of information from the implementation of the Core Curriculum was also used to develop the step-by step procedures in the implementation process.

Implementation may be thought of as putting an identified change into practice in classrooms or other parts of a school or district. In this case, the researchers were studying *school-wide* change, looking at Southeast Elementary's process of effecting an identified change in all its classrooms. Implementation, however, does not happen until adoption and planning are underway. Thus, this account begins with a minimal bit of information about the adoption of the Rainbow Connection.

The process was initiated when the staff began to see a need. In this case, it seemed as though changes in the makeup of the student population and an increase in the number of discipline problems caught the staff's attention. The management team members considered the situation and discussed possibilities for changes, and several members of the team expressed their desire to strengthen the discipline process.

The principal suggested looking into a behavior system at a "sister school" where Rainbow Connection was in operation. The management team took this suggestion to the faculty, recommending that Rainbow be investigated. Several teachers visited the sister school to collect information and observe the system in action. Their favorable report resulted in inviting the school's principal and several teachers to give a workshop presentation about their system during Faculty Study.

The analysis on the next page shows how the whole faculty participated in leadership and decision making at the school.

After this presentation occurred, staff discussed the new system and how it would work at Southeast Elementary during Faculty Study and informally after school in small meetings of teachers. They considered, for example, letting the upper and lower grades have different approaches. The faculty talked about and brainstormed ideas about how they would manage it. After much planning and preparation, a presentation was made to the students at Morning Meeting. Teachers then took the Rainbow plan into their classrooms to fit it with their teaching style and with their students. In so doing, they found parts that seemed not to be successful, so they talked about it again as a group in Faculty Study.

To "work out the bugs," teachers interacted about it in the mornings before school, at lunch in the teachers room, after school in grade-group meetings, and at Faculty Study, where they coached each other in the Rainbow system and in its implementation. They assessed that it was beginning to come together and starting to work and that generally all classrooms were "in sync" at some level.

Everyone was "expected to do it; we shared in the decision and we have ownership." In addition, there was a measure of peer pressure, from the faculty who had accepted the idea, for everybody to get on board. So everyone was expected to give it their best effort. Some staff had doubts or reservations, so people were allowed some variation—for instance, in how rewards were handled. However, everyone was expected to use the system, to have a reward on Friday, to send home a Friday report about students' behavior, and to allow students to participate in the quarterly reward program. "We have all agreed that this is the direction we want to go. We have adopted the program, so everybody invests in its implementation and makes it work in their classroom and school-wide."

The staff endeavored to be consistent by using the same "Rainbow language" with all children throughout the school and on the playground. To learn the "correct language," teachers talked about it at Faculty Study—about the rewards and how to make Rainbow Connection operationally successful. In the same collective way, teachers helped each other to learn and use the new system—"people helping people is central to our school. In making a change, they always feel they are going to have (1) the opportunity to participate in decisions, and (2) colleagues to whom they can go for support."

Faculty Study was seen as an important part of the school structure that provided the time and opportunity for the whole staff to learn about what others were doing to implement the new curriculum, what was working, and what was not working. During the implementation of Core Curriculum, teachers also learned to use Morning Meeting to showcase what students were doing with the new curriculum, thus encouraging students and demonstrating for teachers new ideas about what could be done with the curriculum.

According to the staff responses about implementation, another factor that supported the process was the quality of the staff. The school had a strong reputation that attracted good teachers. Thus, the "seasoned" and new teachers were highly qualified people who made a real contribution to each other, to the students, and to the school. "Teachers bend over backwards to help each other." This collegial family atmosphere was essential to the school's continuous improvement. Like any family, there were questions and concerns brought up; people's feelings were hurt; animosities built up. But these were talked about and put "on the table" so people could level with each other and resolve the issues.

It was difficult in this school to identify precisely who did what on behalf of the implementation process, because the culture nurtured individual development and cultivated widely-held leadership in the school. Most of the staff felt responsible to provide leadership to their colleagues and to students frequently and regularly. The continuous staff development (both in formal settings and in sharing with and learning from each other informally) increased staff capacity among all members. This meant that the school did not depend strongly on just a few leaders. The staff grew together and were, for the most part, a mature and self-actualized group of adults, secure in their abilities and acceptance by each other. But they were also committed to continuous learning, appreciating themselves as an important source of human resources. For these reasons, the school had "collective leadership," although there always remained the need for one or a few individuals to orchestrate the organization's efforts.

In addition to the factors discussed above, Southeast Elementary's adoption and implementation processes seemed based on an understanding of the change process, apparently more intuitive than explicit. Their practice of shared decision making, open and critical inquiry, and norms of continuous improvement seemed almost to dictate how they would conduct the "business" of adoption and implementation.

Table 2

Analysis of the Steps in Adoption at Southeast Elementary

Step	Involvement of the Principal (P), Teacher Leader (T), or Faculty (F)		
1. Faculty expressed concern about redundancies and overlaps as well as gaps in the continuum of students' educational experiences.			F
2. Faculty set a goal for the 1992—93 school year to explore a school-wide curriculum.			F
3. A teacher attended ASCD's national conference and discovered Hirsch's Core Knowledge Curriculum.		T	
4. The teacher shared information about the curriculum with the principal and some of the teachers.		T	
5. The principal and the teacher planned how to provide information to all teachers for their investigation and study.	P		
6. The principal and the teacher conducted a meeting with teachers to reaffirm the school's mission, philosophy, and operating principles; the principal provided a written summary to the teachers after the meeting.	P	T	
7. The principal provided grade-level materials, scope, and sequence to the teachers, who reviewed them in light of their mission and beliefs.	P		
8. The staff met and shared their initial reactions.			F
9. The principal and the teacher had discussions with the staff singly and in small or large groups about how they might use the curriculum.	P	T	
10. The staff continued their study and consideration.			F
11. The staff met and employed a force-field analysis, looking at the benefits and threats of the curriculum to the enhancement of the school's mission—again, the principal provided a written summary.			F
12. The staff met for half a day to plan a thematic unit in order to really make sense of what the curriculum stood for.			F
13. A teacher from another state came as a consultant to a staff meeting to provide "user" information and to share how her school had adapted the curriculum.			F
14. The principal applied for ten days (summer) of in-service so staff might work with the curriculum in case they decided to adopt it (the request was not granted).	P		
15. The principal announced, in a meeting, the annual Core Knowledge conference scheduled out-of-state in May; he visited teachers individually to persuade them to go in order to get full faculty representation (age, experience, ethnicity).	P		
16. At their own expense, half the faculty attended the two-day conference to hear sessions focused on their particular teaching assignments; they met twice a day with the principal to share their knowledge.			F
17. All staff met to hear from those who attended the conference.			F
18. The staff, by consensus, decided to adopt the curriculum with adaptations and met voluntarily for 2 days in June to prepare school-wide units by grade level for the next school year.			F
Number of times the principal, teacher leader, or whole faculty was involved	6	5	10

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Creating a Learning Community

Southeast Elementary School sees itself as a family and a community of learners. Teachers are encouraged to innovate. They are involved in shared decision making, and they share a common vision of what the school should be and where it is headed. Reflection is encouraged. If conflict occurs, it is brought to the surface, shared openly, and resolved. The entire school learns together: students, teachers, parents, all. Teachers are continually discovering how to create and change their reality.

Earlier in this paper, the authors proposed that a learning community performs four functions essential to change and school improvement (Table 1). The following is an analysis of what the principals did to enable these functions to emerge.

Reducing Isolation

The principals and staff of this school worked to create an environment that would reduce their sense of isolation from each other. From the beginning of the school's re-creation, a structure of *family* groupings of students and teachers was established. The principal worked with the teachers to reorganize the use of time in the school to provide one afternoon a week for learning together. The principal protected that time, which was used to work on problems identified by the staff and to learn about the Glasser method of discipline. Faculty Study was also a significant factor in reducing isolation. Time together provided the staff with the opportunity to work through concerns and conflicts. Meeting together became so ingrained in the culture of the school that even when they were away at a national conference, staff met twice daily to share what they were learning.

In addition, high levels of communication were enhanced by bulletins for faculty, parents, and the community. These bulletins were developed and disseminated by the principal. Inviting community members to the school to hold meetings and see firsthand the programs that were in place increased the school's communication with the external community.

Increasing Staff Capacity

Attendance at conferences was part of an ongoing pattern of increasing the staff's capacities. From the beginning, the first principal placed an emphasis on spending all available funds on staff learning opportunities. The staff was viewed as the school's most important resource, thus warranting high levels of investment. Most telling is a statement by one of the principals: "Unless the teachers are the primary learners in the building, the children don't learn much." One method of providing time for this learning, Faculty Study, was discussed above. Another method used by one of the principals was to eliminate several administrative procedures that diverted teachers' attention from teaching. Collecting lunch money, completing a complex daily attendance form, and using an ineffective report card are examples of such procedures that were either eliminated or streamlined.

Staff capacity was also increased by their ongoing involvement in decision making, established by the first principal and insisted on by the teachers. This involvement increased the staff's capacity to analyze needs and collectively plan to meet those needs. Staff developed a sense that together they could create their future. As one of the principals noted, "I felt like it was my job to empower the people around me."

Providing a Caring, Productive Environment

Southeast Elementary was characterized by its caring, productive environment. The reinvention of the school began as an effort to create just such an environment. One of the first principals invested time in identifying the faculty's personal issues and resolving them. *Be kind and share* was established in response to the principal's perception that discipline must be orderly and caring. *Be kind and share* continues to provide the basis for behavior at this "rainbow school." Honoring diversity and communicating to all children that they were welcomed, cared for, and part of the school family was another essential ingredient. Teachers, too, were honored, supported, and trusted; this honoring was the specific focus of action by one of the principals. Indeed, building trust was a focus of all four principals. Morning Meeting, where students, teachers, and parents met to celebrate successes, share work, and honor one another, set the tone for each day.

Promoting Increased Quality

Finally, the culture of the learning community at Southeast Elementary promoted increased quality. Self-development, supported by as many good reading materials as possible, was promoted from the beginning, by all principals for the staff and for themselves. An emphasis on the school's vision in every conversation pushed for improving quality: "How do we create a happy place where children learn?" Once a happy place was created, the focus shifted somewhat to incorporate the students' academic learning outcomes, another aspect of the vision. The caring environment was maintained while the principals modeled and emphasized a focus on academic achievement.

The need identified by the faculty for a coordinated curriculum led to analysis of alternatives, but always in light of their vision, which the principal held as a beacon. Ongoing critical inquiry of this sort and norms of continuous improvement led the school to welcome outside researchers who might be another source of insight for them. The school staff still seek any and all information that they can use to increase the quality of students' experiences, as everyone at the school continues to learn and grow together as a community.

Conclusion

Southeast Elementary School saw itself as a family and a community of learners. The school's principals promoted the following qualities, which supported a strong sense of community:

- a widely shared mission or sense of purpose, and visions of change that enhance the school's mission and goals
- positive staff attitudes toward schooling, students, and change
- caring, collaborative, and collegial relationships among teachers, administrator, and parents
- an pleasant environment that promoted productivity for students and staff
- a consistent focus on students and on learning
- broad-based involvement by faculty in decision making

- continuous critical inquiry that examined the effectiveness of programs and processes for students' benefits
- shared leadership where all staff took responsibility for introducing and supporting the implementation of improvements
- ongoing professional development for staff
- the resolution of conflict for positive results
- an infrastructure that provided a time and place for faculty communication and continuous learning, as well as a time and place for whole-school sharing and celebration of learning

Innovation and reflection were encouraged. The faculty was committed to an ideal, to a way of living and working at the school. Deep caring and trust were requisite factors that permitted this way of working to happen. This school created and maintained a learning community in which children, teachers, administrators, and parents sustained and nurtured one another as they *collectively* created their future.

Addendum on Methodology

The first data collection at the school consisted of tape-recorded face-to-face interviews with the principal, with all full-time regular and special education classroom teachers, and with part-time itinerant specialists: music teacher, librarian, physical education teacher, nurse, and social worker. Among the teachers interviewed, their tenure at the school ranged from 17 years to less than one year. In addition, office staff, some parents, and community members were interviewed. An open, unstructured, qualitative approach was used for the interviews. For the qualitative approach, Patton (1990) advises "that the persons being interviewed respond in their own words to express their own personal perspectives...the response format should be open-ended....The interviewer never supplies and predetermines the phrases or categories that must be used by respondents to express themselves" (pp. 289–290).

Data were analyzed using the constant comparative method (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Lincoln and Guba, 1985). In accordance with this method, data were reviewed and "unitized"—that is, the text of the interview transcriptions was cut into parts, each of which represented information about a particular topic. The first piece of topical text was placed in a stack. The next piece of text was compared to the first; if its focus was the same as the first, it was placed on that stack. If the focus was different, it started a new stack indicating a new topic. All text units were reviewed and placed on stacks as their topics were compared.

To explore how principals develop a school's culture, an in-depth interview was conducted with each of the principals to hear their individual accounts of the school's development. Again, the approach was open, allowing the principals to reflect on their experiences at the school and on their actions and contributions. Data relevant to their philosophy and actions were identified in the transcripts of the interviews, using the constant comparative method, and cross-checked with those from the teacher interviews for validation. This procedure guided the "sense making" process (Murphy, 1994).

Since "stories are a way of knowing" (Seidman, 1991, p. 1), stories that described the tenure of each principal were developed and sent to the principals for "member checking" (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). In addition, the researchers' colleagues who had been in the school and interacted with the school staff were asked to critique the data and the analysis. This procedure of "peer debriefing" (Lincoln and Guba, 1985) by a disinterested but informed peer contributed to the credibility of the results.

After revisions based on all the feedback, a final step was to examine the story text and identify the actions taken by the principals in the school's development. These actions were then organized to reflect factors and functions identified in the literature as constituting a context supportive of school change.

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New Mexico: Implementing the Family Plan at Crossroads Middle School

Crossroads Middle School is located in a small city built around a town square in the northeastern part of New Mexico. One prominent feature of the city, once the largest and most prosperous commercial center in the New Mexico territory, is a remarkable group of residences and buildings, diverse in craftsmanship and style, still proudly intact after nearly a century of use. Although it would probably be described as a rural community if compared to cities across the country, it is one of the larger towns in New Mexico. It is unique for such a small city in being the home of three post secondary institutions including a state university. This small city also has two public school districts.

The administrative building of the school district is an old, two-story building that was once the courthouse. School board meetings are conducted in what used to be the courtroom. The district has five elementary schools, one middle school, and one high school.

At the time of this study, Crossroads Middle School had approximately 600 students in grades 6-8. About 80 percent of the student population was Hispanic, according to one counselor, and more than 70 percent participated in the free or reduced lunch program.

The staff, about 65 percent Hispanic, was relatively stable and experienced, with many having taught more than ten years and one teacher having taught more than 20 years at the middle school. The majority of the teaching staff had many years of experience working with young adolescents and expressed their commitment to this age group. The student/teacher ratio was approximately 20 to one.

Local History of School Change

Crossroads Middle School was constructed in 1969 during the time of the "open school" movement, and the school incorporated many of the features of that concept in its physical design. These features included common learning areas, classrooms without walls and doors, and placement of the library in a central area that is a passageway to different parts of the building. However, teachers were not trained to function in the "open classroom," which resulted in ineffective implementation of that instructional approach. Very traditional instructional strategies continued to be used, and soon walls and doorways were constructed where possible. The perception by many was that the "open school" was a failed attempt at change.

The superintendent was regarded as one of the state's most active proponents of systemic school change. He and the assistant superintendent (hereinafter referred to as the administrative leadership) focused on making changes in the district to benefit students, to maximize their learning opportunities. Among the changes these two administrators implemented was the use of a battery of screening instruments developed by Selection Research, Inc. (SRI) for making hiring decisions. These instruments were used to identify prospective staff who would be amenable to innovative change. This battery included "Principal Perceiver" and "Teacher Perceiver" instruments, used in hiring principals and teachers, respectively.

Another change the administrative leadership implemented was the reorganization of elementary schools by reconfiguring a K–3 school and a grade 4–5 school into two K–5 schools. Although the administrative leadership made the school changes to better meet the needs of students, the changes met with considerable initial opposition and controversy from both faculty and community members.

The district and the local campus had, in the past, offered many opportunities for staff, students, and parents to be involved in innovative activities and programs. Among the programs offered to students were the following: Math Counts, Young Astronauts, Science Olympiad, a science and mathematics competition, the inclusion of special education students in regular classrooms, and athletic programs. Parents and volunteers are involved in the Parent Teacher Organization; they tutor, provide noon duty, serve on committees, and chaperone at social events. Staff are involved in two statewide programs, Re:Learning and the Rockefeller Academy.

Both Re:Learning and the Rockefeller Academy promoted and supported networking among schools across the state as they engaged in various school improvement efforts. The Rockefeller Academy was a four-week intensive training session sponsored by the University of New Mexico. Participants were selected through an application process based on their commitment to meeting the needs of at-risk students. Re:Learning, also a statewide initiative, emphasized addressing the specific and unique needs of each school as it progressed through school change. The Superintendent was instrumental in facilitating access to these statewide school improvement efforts.

The Family Plan

During the 1990–91 school year, the middle school moved from functioning as a traditional junior high to using middle school educational approaches. The Family Plan, as the innovation was called, was one in which teachers of four to six core subjects worked together like a family unit. The subjects were language arts, social studies, mathematics, and science. There were two teams per grade level. These teams were initially called teams A and B, but were later renamed red and white because of the grade connotations of A and B. Components of the Family Plan were as follows:

- a "family" consisting of four to six teachers and approximately 80 to 100 students
- heterogeneous grouping within the classes
- cooperative learning as an instructional method
- interdisciplinary instruction developed by the teachers in the "family"

The students in a *family* rotated among the family's core classes. At first students were promoted as a cohort to the next grade rather than divided into new families, but that practice was abandoned because of teachers' concerns that high-performing and low-performing students were not evenly distributed among teams. Initially, both the students and teachers in a family met together each day for a morning advisory period. Later, this practice was eliminated because of scheduling problems. but an important component was added: a common preparation period for teachers in a family unit. This period was used to coordinate lessons and to address the problems of particular students.

The Vision

The driving forces behind the shift to the Family Plan were the superintendent and the assistant superintendent. They initiated the innovation because they strongly believed in meeting the needs of students, and the Family Plan offered students the kind of supportive environment and sense of belonging that would help them thrive. In addition, they desired a systemic improvement targeting at-risk students.

The change envisioned by the administrative leadership was grounded in research concerning middle school education. This research was reviewed in *Turning Points: Preparing American Youth for the 21st Century*, a 1989 report by the Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development (Task Force on Education of Young Adolescents). According to the thinking reflected in this seminal report, a "volatile mismatch" exists between the organization and curriculum of middle grade schools and the intellectual and emotional needs of young adolescents.

> Early adolescence is characterized by significant growth and change. For most, the period is initiated by puberty, a period of development more rapid than in any other phase of life except infancy. Cognitive growth is equally dramatic for many youth, bringing the new capacity to think in more abstract and complex ways than they could as children. Increased sense of self and enhanced capacity for intimate relationships can also emerge in early adolescence (Carnegie Report, 1989, p. 8).

The challenge for educational institutions, the report says, is to help adolescents at this early age to acquire self-esteem, a sense of belonging, reliable and close human relationships, a sense of usefulness, and a constructive way to express their inherent curiosity and energy. However, according to the Carnegie report, recent research notes a range of negative indicators for this age group, all of which have alarming implications for students' engagement and satisfaction with education. Adolescence is a period of trial and error during which many children first experiment with alcohol, drugs, and sexual behavior. Caught in a vortex of changing demands, their engagement in learning diminishes, and rates of alienation, substance abuse, absenteeism, and dropping out of school begin to rise.

Along with the biological and psychological change of this age also come drastic changes in the social and educational environment as well, foremost among them the transition from elementary to secondary school. For most youth, the shift from elementary to junior high means moving from the stability of one primary classroom in a small, neighborhood school, to a much larger, more impersonal environment, typically at a greater distance from home. In this new setting, teachers and classmates will change classrooms as many as six or seven times a day. The curricula may seem unconnected and irrelevant to students, and the constant shifting from class to class is not conducive to forming stable relationships with peers or adults (Carnegie, 1989) or to reaching closure on learning tasks.

Outside the school, the sense of community that once existed in urban neighborhoods and in rural towns has eroded. Stable, closely-knit communities where people know and look out for each other are far less common than they were a generation or two ago. Therefore, at this critical age, "when young people face unprecedented choices and pressures, all too often the guidance they needed as children and need no less as adolescents, is withdrawn, leading many to feel a sense of isolation" (Carnegie, 1989, p. 8).

To improve the educational experiences of middle grade students, the Carnegie report recommends creating small communities for learning where stable, close, mutually respectful relationships with adults and peers are considered fundamental for intellectual development and personal growth. The superintendent phrased it this way:

> I realized a long time ago you really cannot treat education as if to say 'We are here only for the business of education and don't bother me about anything else; I will teach you math, but I don't want to talk about anything else.' That attitude I never really liked because we know now that we have to treat the child holistically.

A key element of these learning communities is the grouping of students and teachers as teams that ensure that every student is known well by at least one adult. The superintendent wanted to use such teams so the school environment would "mirror as much as possible a supportive family environment for kids."

Other strategies recommended by the Carnegie report and also part of what the superintendent hoped to implement were the elimination of tracking by achievement level and the promotion of cooperative learning. He stated the following:

> A typical school emphasizes individual achievement [but] a good middle school takes on the responsibility of all its members. In that sense, everybody is responsible for everybody else. [If] a child is doing well in mathematics, he then has the responsibility to share that with somebody else who is not doing very well. It is a very different picture of individual achievement, rather one of you give your hand out to somebody else that is not doing so well and bring somebody else up.

The superintendent summed up his belief by saying, "My vision of this school is that as a consequence of caring for each other, the academic progress and the other typical indicators of school progress will naturally accrue."

The Inception

Most interview subjects agreed that change was encouraged and supported under the leadership in place at the beginning of the study. One teacher summed it up by saying that the superintendent and assistant superintendent "came in and wanted to create an environment that was safe for students to be willing to risk, to try...[and] an environment that employees felt safe to risk and try."

To gain support for changing to the middle school concept, the administrative leadership used several strategies to "share the vision." The district administrators began discussing with various staff members issues concerning middle school education—issues that had been addressed in *Turning Points*. They sent two staff members to visit an exemplary school in Albuquerque to see the Family Plan in action. According to one of these staff members, they returned "all excited but ran into a brick wall"—the opposition of those who knew nothing about the middle school concept and those who were just generally opposed to change. So, other teachers and parents were sent to observe schools throughout the state that had implemented middle school education.

The administrative leaders also provided staff development, special release time, and financial support for change. Prior to the 1990–91 school year, the superintendent arranged for faculty members to take college courses on middle school education. The courses were conducted by professors from the state university but were held locally for the convenience of school personnel. Although enrollment was voluntary, all who participated received graduate credit and a stipend. Additional staff were hired and nine portable classrooms were added to the campus. According to several staff members, the Family Plan had the beneficial effect of reducing student/teacher ratios.

These activities demonstrated not only a commitment to increase the knowledge of and support for the middle school concept, but also a commitment of resources: trips to visit model programs, stipends for teachers taking courses, and additional classrooms and teachers. These strategies were successful in developing support for the change in organizational structure and instructional strategies.

There was also evidence that as the change was implemented, monitoring occurred and adjustments were made to correct deficiencies or to improve the new configuration of the school. For example, four major changes occurred during the second year of the Family Plan: (1) the family teams were reorganized; (2) a rotating class schedule was instituted; (3) a new principal was hired; and (4) the position of the assistant principal was modified.

Initially, the composition of the teams was self-determined; the teachers themselves decided the membership of their family teams. Some teachers were happy with the people on their team, while others were not. Unfortunately, experienced teachers who were committed to exemplary teaching and to the Family Plan were not evenly distributed among the groups. Although the majority of the family groups functioned adequately, several interviewees commented that one particular group was dysfunctional and this affected the implementation of the innovation negatively; there was consensus that implementation was faltering because of this one team, which even received complaints from parents.

To respond to this problem, the family teams were reorganized by the assistant superintendent. Some resentment developed regarding the new groupings and the authoritarian method that was used to reorganize the family teams. This resentment was particularly apparent among teachers who were reassigned from a family that they liked to the family they felt was dysfunctional.

The second year of the Family Plan also included scheduling adjustments. A rotating schedule—a three-day cycle of class periods—provided staff and students the opportunity for variety in the order of class periods, thus avoiding the tendency of the last class period "burn-out" to affect any particular subject.

Initially, a 35-minute advisory period was included as part of the morning schedule. During this time teachers could work with students to address such issues as self-esteem or to confer with students individually. Later the advisory period was eliminated because the school needed time in the schedule for a bilingual course, to obtain state funds for bilingual instruction. But the emphasis on mentoring and advising students continued, and another scheduling change provided positive results. A common preparation period for teachers in a family was implemented, which eliminated the need to hold planning meetings after school. Respondents reported that the common preparation period not only allowed teachers more time to do cross-disciplinary planning, but also enhanced their ability to help students, since now they could discuss problems with their team members. Sometimes the common preparation period was used to allow all the core teachers to meet with a student or with parents.

A new principal was hired for the 1991-92 school year. In selecting the principal, the superintendent deliberately chose someone who would "make sure that the Family Plan was implemented." The new principal, who had previously been a teacher and counselor at the high school, voiced her belief in developing a shared approach to leading the school. She embraced the Family Plan concept and provided additional support for staff development and resources.

During her first year at the middle school, for example, she arranged for pre-school in-service, including stipends for teachers, and organized a day for team-building. She found funds for teachers to attend meetings and conferences, encouraged them to attend, and then arranged for them to present the information they gained to the rest of the faculty. She also provided financial support for the families. A teacher said "...every family got $300 to buy rewards or things we needed for our family. [The principal] has done more to get me stuff for my kids than I've ever gotten before during my teaching career."

The new principal also encouraged grant-seeking, and teachers successfully applied for grants for books from the Reading is Fundamental Foundation, for film from the Polaroid Foundation to be used as an instructional aid, and for additional professional development on cooperative learning from the Carnegie Foundation.

Members of the faculty had received intensive training on leadership and ways to address the needs of at-risk students from the Rockefeller Academy at the University of New Mexico. The principal initiated a forum for ongoing discussion by inviting Rockefeller team members to a breakfast meeting. All team members attended. They decided that such meetings were beneficial and necessary, and agreed to make it a weekly meeting.

Early during the second year of the Family Plan, the assistant principal retired. This provided the principal, central office administrators, and staff with the chance to reconsider the role and responsibilities of the assistant principal. A graduate intern from the local state university was hired as a part-time assistant principal while the position was being reassessed. A new job description was developed to facilitate the implementation of the Family Plan.

The Implementation

Although the administration continually articulated its emphasis on meeting the students' learning needs, in the early stages of implementation, the attitudinal beliefs of some staff were a barrier to change. The beliefs identified in interviews included the following: a general resistance to change by some, on the grounds that the school was already doing a good job; a perception by some that the innovation was just a repeat of an approach already tried and discarded; and a belief by some that the innovation was "just another change that will go away."

There is no question that the shift to the middle school concept was initiated from the top down. In fact, one teacher who now staunchly supports the change commented, "The Family Plan was shoved down our throats by the superintendent and assistant superintendent." Another teacher commented that "the faculty did not feel like it was their idea," adding that there should have been a longer planning time before implementation.

Although implementation was accelerated, many discussions and planning sessions about the Family Plan did in fact occur. These discussions allowed staff to learn more about their colleagues' knowledge and skills and resulted in their overcoming their initial resistance to the innovation. The discussions focused on addressing the needs of students and led to teachers encouraging one another to "give the Family Plan a try."

The superintendent was given credit for providing information and resources which encouraged attitudinal changes. One teacher echoed the comments of many in saying, "When it [the Family Plan] started, nobody really knew that much about it. A lot of people including myself have not kept up with current literature and innovations." The college credit classes and visits to other schools mentioned above were important. The teachers noted that "the classes really helped," and "we got good ideas from other schools we visited."

Early on, resistance materialized about one component of the Family Plan, the use of heterogeneous grouping. Because it eliminated the honors program, this move was initially opposed strongly by some parents and teachers. The administration persisted, emphasizing the benefits of more student attention and cross-disciplinary units. Eventually a compromise was worked out with the continuation of pre-algebra and algebra honors classes. Ultimately, the move from homogeneous to heterogeneous groups was seen as an example of the high expectations administrators and staff had of all students.

Resistance also developed against the plan to relocate teachers to various sections of the school building in order to be near their families. Some teachers were staunchly against physical relocation. Just about everybody had to move, and one teacher commented that "one of the harder changes was giving up classrooms that teachers had been in for 10 or 20 years." There were objections to moving away from friends, moving to a room farther from the smoking area, and moving from the back of the building to a room that was closer to the main office.

For almost everyone, it meant moving away from department colleagues, and it meant that curriculum materials and department equipment had to be redistributed among the six family units. Several respondents commented that the effects of this change were negative: teachers had less communication with subject-matter colleagues, there was weakened continuity in curriculum, and the availability and coordination of materials and equipment were reduced.

Despite the initial resistance for the reasons cited above, interview respondents agreed that the superintendent and assistant superintendent were motivated by the high priority they gave to meeting students' needs. Many of the staff shared the administrators' priority, and this led them, in time, to respond with cooperation, collaboration and encouragement of each other. The following quotes sum up the thinking expressed by respondents as they recalled the early period of implementation:

> We had some lengthy and heated discussions about [the Family Plan]. Some parents and staff members were reluctant to change because there was 'nothing wrong with our system.' [But] something needed to change. Kids were getting lost in the shuffle.

> Not that we went into restructuring trying to fix a problem. We went into this movement because we thought we could do a little bit better in addressing the social issues and the academic issues of the kids.
>
> We have a real high percentage of students that are at risk. So maybe the Family Plan was brought in to give them more of a solid feeling of being part of something when they came to school—give them some stability.

Comments such as "putting the kids first" and "being here for the kids, not just the pay check," were evidence of a commitment to addressing students' needs.

The Family Plan relied heavily on teacher teaming, a concept that researchers and educators alike praise for keeping teachers motivated and for providing focus to their efforts to improve performance. But interview data from the research site confirms the dilemma of teaming emerging in more recent studies.

One study in particular was conducted by the Center on Organization and Restructuring of Schools (Kruse and Louis, 1995). Referring to the middle school emphasis on creating self-esteem and making students feel a part of a family, Kruse and Louis acknowledge that teaming provides "an environment conducive to learning by reducing stress of anonymity and isolation." They point out, however, that as teachers become more deeply involved with the needs of their particular students, they can lose sight of school-wide goals and subject-matter focus. Issues of long-term school-wide effectiveness and how it can be improved often remain unaddressed.

This finding was reflected in staff interviews. Some staff members lamented the absence of departmental exchanges which had existed previously. They felt that this absence hindered program continuity and sharing of curriculum information and materials. Several teachers at the research site echoed the findings of Kruse and Louis, commenting on the loss of close intradepartmental communication. As one teacher remarked, "We hardly see some of the same teachers that we used to. [Going to the family plan] broke up a real strong faculty. There was a lot of camaraderie in some departments."

Some teachers' comments suggested their personal discomfort with teaming: "If a teacher in my team does something I don't like, I worry that it's a reflection on me." But, again, over time faculty expressed more positive support of the benefits of working with teachers of other areas of the curriculum.

Interaction with family teachers resulted in some creative interdisciplinary teaching. One teacher described a unit focused on the book *Alive*: the social studies teacher used the book to explore the social aspects of survival; the science teacher explored the scientific processes of starvation, and the English teacher used the book as the basis for language and writing assignments. Another creative project involved a dinner theater undertaken by one of the families. Students in the family took on all the different responsibilities necessary for the project. Some students, for example, were in charge of tickets and refreshments, while another group consisted of the actors and stage hands.

These successes allowed teachers to see the benefit of interdisciplinary units, and their attitudes about the new organization became more positive. One teacher summed up the change in the following manner:

> Before [the Family Plan] I taught all social studies classes, 9–12, and I pretty much thought of things vertically. Now I am trying to think horizontally across the curriculum and am trying to think of ways to involve my fellow team members so that we can try things together. If you have a kid that is really good in writing, he or she can certainly apply that skill in literature and social studies and science. That is what I find myself thinking more about.

Teachers remarked that the Family Plan greatly facilitated collaboration and cooperation among teachers who previously had limited interaction. All teachers interviewed expressed the feeling that this new interaction was a beneficial effect of this change. Statements such as "we share ideas," "[we] encourage each other," and "we can troubleshoot beforehand" are examples of a growing collegial environment at Crossroads Middle School.

When asked about implementation problems, many respondents referred to the crowded, poorly designed facilities and the difficulty of teaching and learning during building renovation. (Renovation began as a result of a successful bond election.) By all accounts, there were serious problems with the facilities when this study began. Teachers described "weird-shaped" rooms, rooms without windows, rooms that had no direct exit to hallways, portable buildings that were either icy or stiflingly hot, rooms that lacked safety equipment. One teacher remarked that the "physical environment is as bad as any ghetto school could possibly be," and another described the facility as "ramshackle and falling apart." Delays, noise, frequent relocations, and the need to teach in temporary classrooms were problems experienced during the remodeling.

Some respondents attributed the success of the bond election to community support for the Family Plan, noting that a previous bond election had failed. The Family Plan philosophy was institutionalized in the design of the building, in that new wings were constructed to accommodate family units for each of the sixth, seventh and eighth grades. The renovation was completed in the fall of 1995.

Another problem in implementation was a change in leadership. During the fourth year of the innovation, the superintendent and the assistant superintendent, both of whom were instrumental in initiating the Family Plan, resigned. By this time leaders at the school were strongly supportive of the plan, and some school staff who had initially opposed the innovation became, over time, become its strongest advocates. One respondent concluded the following:

> It [the change] wasn't really a democratic process; we were told we were going to change and we were told how we were going to change. But the effort put into it is still ongoing, and we are still working toward the [former superintendent's] vision, and I would like to think that vision is being personally incorporated [by our staff] —that people are beginning to feel good about what has happened.

Most of the interview respondents supported of the Family Plan configuration. However, there were a few comments in final interviews suggesting that some faculty were uncertain that the Family Plan would continue if it was not supported by the board and the central administration. However, one teacher put this concern to rest by noting, "...we have to keep in mind what is important here. It is the kids, not egos, not the administration versus the teachers. It is the kids. Say that a child is not doing well...it is the system that is not doing the work." This respondent went on to emphasize that the question to keep asking is, "What are the characteristics of a school that can help a child succeed?"

Community Influence on Change

The community was described as "tight knit" and somewhat isolated, with a school district that was subject to political vagaries. The following quote by one teacher was echoed by others interviewed: "We as a community have for many years been very political and there has been a considerable amount of political patronage that has transpired. People are hired and fired based on political approval."

When asked what attitudes most hurt efforts to improve the school, staff provided such answers as "politics is the biggest," "turnover in leadership," "political upheaval," "political problems," and political interference in "attempts to remove poor, old-style teachers." Some respondents felt there was a tendency in the community to support those who were from the community and to be suspicious of "outsiders." One administrator commented, "I'm even considered an outsider even though I came here in 1969."

Although teachers were involved in interviewing candidates for vacancies, some who had been involved indicated that staff recommendations were overruled by the board. One respondent reported that political leadership had a chilling effect on willingness to change and further noted, "It takes a lot for people to dare to risk; people tell me, 'I can't say much, because I have a mortgage...and my wife has a job, and I can't afford to lose [all] that.'"

During the course of the study, the makeup of the board changed and the top administration changed. Also during this period, two bond elections were held, the first unsuccessful, the second successful.

In an interesting development, a former teacher at Crossroads was one of three new trustees elected to the board. This trustee had been a teacher at the school when the shift to the middle school concept occurred. There was a perception by some that he "did not like the family plan." Some expressed a fear that "he will change things by doing away with the family plan," although by the time he was elected, the family plan was fairly well established and supported by the faculty.

Although the superintendent left voluntarily, many in the district perceived that *he felt* he had lost the support of the board. One incident which apparently discouraged him was the board's failure to support his recommendation to terminate a teacher about whom there were a lot of complaints. When the board failed to support the superintendent, some observed that he became more reluctant to impose his will on the school.

An unsuccessful bond election was held early on during the study. Some people attributed its failure to a lack of support by faculty and parents who were opposed to implementation of the middle school concept, especially to the elimination of honors programs and departmental "breakups" described earlier. However, a successful bond election was held later and was widely perceived to be a validation of the middle school concept. The bonds included funds for remodeling, which institutionalized the Family Plan by building special wings for families. One teacher commented, "I think the bond issue passed because of the Family Plan. Parents could come in and actually see the kids trying to improve themselves, and they could see that our facilities don't lend themselves to that kind of involvement."

Despite political pressures from without, it appeared that there was a positive school climate and culture *within* the school. The majority of the staff appeared to maintain and act on their shared commitment to the students. Relevant comments included the following:

> I don't think that people necessarily change just for the sake of change—but when things seem to be positive or look good, people are willing to try them.
>
> The underlying belief is what's good for the kids. I think the basic philosophy is...be here for the kids.
>
> ...there is a large enough body among the faculty that are willing to try new things, and that facilitates change.

Although there was often mention of teachers who were resistant to change, it appeared that most wanted to "give change a chance."

Lessons Learned from the New Mexico Case Study

The New Mexico case study has been useful in observing the effect of a "middle school" organization on faculty and students and in observing the implementation of a change over time.

According to interview data, grouping students into units of 100 and introducing block-scheduling had a significant impact on both teachers and students. Interestingly, students' comments closely paralleled those of teachers. Teachers resented the "departmental breakups" discussed earlier and felt they were more isolated from other faculty. Students, who were divided into two families in each grade, missed seeing friends who had been placed in the other family. Teachers and students both noted that one of the families was weak, with one student commenting, "Our family had good teachers, but the other family didn't." Both teachers and students expressed the desire to choose the teachers in their family.

Teachers liked the common planning period which allowed them to coordinate and plan interdisciplinary lessons. Students noticed that after the common planning period was instituted there was more consistency across subjects and that tests were scheduled so that they did not all fall on the same day. Both teachers and students expressed their concern that the Family Plan might not foster the independence that students would need for the transition to high school. As one student expressed it, "High school was a jolt because we were used to togetherness."

On balance, however, teachers and students were pleased that family units afforded them greater opportunities to develop relationships with each other. Teachers reported they were more effective in meeting their students' educational and social needs. Although the district did not conduct a formal assessment, the perception that students were performing better was reflected in the following anecdotal reports:

> Last year's freshmen had 65 students who were receiving two or more Fs at the end of the first grade period. This year (after Family Plan implementation) there were only 30.
>
> The honor roll is bigger. The A honor roll went from 8 to 25 students.
>
> I can see [improvement] in informal ways. [In my class] we do journals. You can see a student has changed through their journals. A student will start out writing 3 lines. They just can't think of anything to write. Then you start talking more and encouraging them and they become more involved with you personally, and they become sort of committed to the class. They get more interested, and eventually they are filling up a whole notebook.
>
> The good effect for the students is that students having a difficult time are able to get more help in a subject area. The teachers are planning together and are able to monitor students better than before because the four [core] teachers have the same students whereas before nobody had the same students.

Some staff also indicated that the Family Plan allowed more flexibility in scheduling and interdisciplinary planning through such comments as:

> Mr. K. and I get together once in awhile and discuss things—how we can interrelate social studies and literature. I know he has all my kids and he knows I have all his, so anything we do is going to correlate. It works out well that way.
>
> If we have an assignment that goes into or beyond an hour block, we can borrow time [from other core teachers] and keep the students there. If we have a student who has something going, we can keep him there.

Improvements were also noted in attendance, behavior, and social adjustment. On the part of both students and family, there appeared to be a growing sense of caring and belonging, as illustrated by the following comments.

> I notice less absenteeism. Even for the students who don't do a lot, they want to be here. They would rather be here than at home.
>
> There is less vandalism than two years ago. We don't see marks on the walls or posters torn up.
>
> I think there is a lack of [negative] competition and 'proving' themselves because the kids are in a family. There is a sense of trust and knowing they are partners.

> Kids feel closer to the four core teachers. They seem to relate to us in the halls and also in the classroom a little better.
>
> The first year students had a hard time with the Family Plan, but I think now the students can see that they're probably getting a better education, because the teachers are more concerned about what they are learning and about their self-esteem as well.
>
> The teachers get to feeling protective [towards our family]. Not that we have any negative feelings toward the other family members, but we think that our kids are pretty special and we try to do things for them, help them out, and I think it is good.
>
> The kids are seeing us not only as teachers but maybe as role models, older big brothers and sisters. They come in and confide in us, tell us their problems. Before, classes were big and we just didn't have time to explore a concern we might have. Now if you can't take care of it in fifteen minutes, you are able to go to the room next door and say 'Mr. L., do you mind if I talk to you about a student,' and it is within the family.

Although the Family Plan was meant to benefit all students, it was especially geared toward at-risk students, increasing opportunities for them to improve academic performance. When asked what school changes were specifically aimed at helping at-risk students, many staff responded "the Family Plan" and cited the following specific benefits:

- the family structure provides students with more individualized attention from teachers and more peer support from families.
- heterogeneous grouping allows students to change their perceptions of themselves and their learning abilities
- cooperative learning provides students with leadership opportunities, role-modeling of appropriate learning behavior, and the benefit of teaching and learning from peers.
- interdisciplinary units give students a more comprehensive curriculum and interrelate the skills and knowledge they are acquiring.

One counselor shared the story of an at-risk student finding himself in a group of high achieving students and going to the counselor to request a transfer. She listened to the student and convinced him to give it a try. After a while, she checked on the student's progress. She found that his performance was improving and that he had decided to remain with the group. This counselor credited the student's progress to the teacher's ability to establish a caring relationship. The administration and faculty continually demonstrated their emphasis on meeting the students' needs.

After four years of implementation, the Family Plan appeared to be institutionalized at the site, at least in structure, if not in instructional approach. Interdisciplinary instruction declined after the superintendent and assistant superintendent resigned; some respondents commented that administrative pressure for cross-disciplinary units was lacking. Interdisciplinary units were highly regarded by many staff, and in fact, some outstanding examples of their use occurred. However, their use was still reported to be at a minimum (approximately one unit per year) since an inordinate amount of time was needed to plan these units. Consequently, teachers requested a second preparation period.

In addition to the findings in regard to the effectiveness of the family plan, the New Mexico case study has supported the findings of the Leadership for Change research about facilitative leaders. From a review of change efforts, both successful and unsuccessful, LFC staff have identified six categories of action that assist the change process. As described by Hord (1992), these six are as follows:

- Creating an atmosphere and culture for change
- Developing and communicating the vision
- Planning and providing resources
- Providing training and development
- Monitoring and checking progress
- Continuing to give assistance

There was evidence that the administrative leadership in the New Mexico district incorporated these strategies in implementing the Family Plan. Although the vision for the Family Plan was clearly the superintendent's, he worked hard at spreading that vision through discussions with faculty and parents, by providing professional development opportunities for faculty, and by sending people on field trips to other districts to let them see firsthand how the change might work. Faculty were unanimous in reporting that the superintendent encouraged interdisciplinary units and cooperative learning, and that he provided whatever books and planning materials they needed to facilitate those activities. He used hiring opportunities to select people who would support and enhance the plan, and he was willing to make adjustments in assignments, schedules, and even facilities to improve the plan.

The New Mexico case study also supported the findings of the Leadership for Change researchers in regard to the change process itself. The literature emphasizes some important concepts: (1) change is a process, not an event, and (2) people have various concerns about change. Researchers (Rogers, 1971; Glickman, 1981; Hall and Hord, 1987; and Scott and Jaffe, 1989) have documented that individuals going through change move along a continuum from lack of awareness to resistance to adoption to commitment to the change. This movement, which may be at different rates for different people, is usually related to such factors as knowledge about the innovation, perceptions about their own ability, other changes occurring at the same time, and the support they are provided. Movement through these "stages of concern" affects whether individuals adapt and how they adapt to a change. While movement cannot be forced, all the literature shows that movement through the stages can be facilitated.

In the study, interviews that were conducted over time revealed that teacher attitudes changed progressively. Although a few teachers immediately embraced the Family Plan, others resisted. Some indicated they were unaware of research concerning adolescence as it related to the organization of a school (traditional junior high versus middle school). Some felt that "family plan" was just a new name for "team teaching." Some staff actively resisted adoption of the Family

Plan because it required other changes—relocation of rooms, cooperative learning, and teaming. The quotes below suggest the various stages that faculty moved through in adopting the plan:

> My feeling coming in was I am going to go to my room, do my thing just like I have always done, and I will be just another cog in the wheel. But since I have been involved with the Family Plan, I have seen how it can work. It has positive results and I can see why they implemented it.
>
> I personally was anxious, but once we got into it, it was so smooth.
>
> The first year we [teachers] were hesitant, and as a matter of fact we had some major bickering and complaining. But we worked hard to get it going because we were told that staff was of the essence in the program's success. We all gave it our best shot—and the change is good.

Teachers noted that professional development was instrumental in changing attitudes and facilitating change at this site. One teacher recalled, "We had classes after school from 3:30 to 7:30 in the evening. A lot of times we stayed there talking until 9:00 or later because we were so excited." The field trips to other sites and the provision of curriculum materials and equipment were also cited in interviews as instrumental in allaying concerns. Although faculty initially resisted it, the teaming resulted in interaction with other faculty members and in some very dynamic and creative curriculum experiments.

Finally, the New Mexico study showed how a forceful leader operates. The inception of the innovation was a result of the superintendent's knowledge about organizational structure and his understanding of the needs of middle school children. Because he was superintendent, he was in a position to impose his ideas upon the school and to force an organizational change from the traditional junior high school to the middle school. Yet a leader who is also a facilitator understands that there must be a balance between pressure and support. While the superintendent continually pressed for change he provided resources and encouragement to help those affected by it. The following statement from a teacher illustrates this balancing act:

> That was one good thing [about the superintendent]. He never turned anything down if it was reasonable. Teachers would see others trying out things and ask for a book or materials. If a teacher thought he or she might use it, he would get it. We got tons of things on cooperative learning because [the administrative leadership] felt that it was going to be very important to help the teachers help the kids.

The study of this site suggests that top-down leadership can work even though it may not be an ideal strategy. When care is taken to ensure that staff are informed about the reasons for the change, when resources and encouragement are provided, and when they can observe positive benefits of the change, those most directly affected are likely to become proponents.

Although the top leadership at this site has changed, the process of change is continuing. The quote below suggests that the Family Plan organization has been institutionalized and that teachers are now working on refinements and other innovations.

> We are still taking classes and workshops to improve our skills in cooperative learning and in setting up interdisciplinary programs. In the next couple of months (another teacher) and I are doing research on block scheduling, which we would like to implement next year. That will set our family totally free.

During a data-collection visit in November 1993, teachers, students and parents interviewed reported that the Family Plan had great merit and that it should continue at the site. They believed that it made a difference in teaching students how to cope better with the pressures of adolescence and in acclimating youth to a school environment that was not as self-contained as the elementary classrooms from which they came. In fact, teachers strongly recommended that the Family Plan be extended to ninth grade to ease students' transition to high school.

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Oklahoma: Green Country School's Rise Above Poverty

Amidst the rolling hills of northeastern Oklahoma, Green Country School was a pre-K–8 school that boasted an unusual variety of facilities. In the morning, parents and other members of the community were welcome to enjoy recreational activities at the school: an "early bird" swim in the Junior Olympic-size indoor swimming pool or a jog around the nature trail behind the school. If they wished, they could drop their toddlers off at the preschool. After school, parents could involve themselves either as instructors or participants in the school's community education program, which offered classes, crafts, water aerobics, and other activities. Little League baseball and basketball, as well as the swimming pool and nature trail, also attracted crowds after school. On certain days of the week, the family literacy program, initiated in the 1994–95 school year, engaged children in educational or cultural activities while their parents developed language or computer skills. Once a month, students, staff, and parents organized a community party around a specific theme. From time to time they also staged other events, to which nearby schools and community organizations were invited.

Instruction during the school day was grounded in the firm belief that every child can learn if the teaching style matches the child's learning style. Older students learned how to forecast the weather in science class, and some produced a daily television show (including the weather forecast) over the school's own cable channel. Younger students might be featured on the show, participating in a special class activity. In a darkroom, students learned both the art and chemistry involved in developing photographs. Cameras and camcorders were used both to reinforce learning and to promote artistic expression. Poetry, pantomime, and puppetry were other avenues for artistic expression.

At the psychomotor center the youngest students were actively engaged in learning to count while jumping rope. Here students learned numbers, colors, letters of the alphabet, and other words, while shapes and colors on the carpet, exercise equipment, and manipulatives provided visual and kinesthetic reinforcement for these linguistic and numerical concepts. Students also learned mathematics and science by cooking or baking in a nearby kitchen; the food they made served as both incentive and reward for their work. Of all the programs and facilities at Green Country, the superintendent was most proud of the psychomotor center.

In general, the variety of activities before, during, and after school were designed to make learning both active and fun. In 1988 Green Country was one of 283 schools recognized by the U.S. Department of Education as National Schools of Excellence (now called Blue Ribbon Schools). That same year the school received the James Madison Elementary School Award for outstanding curriculum, an honor shared with only six other schools in the nation. In a statewide academic competition during the 1991–92 school year, the school placed first in mathematics and 17th overall.

School District and Community

Although Green Country sounds like a school in a wealthy district, it was actually a rural school in Oklahoma's poorest county, said to have the largest

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population of Cherokees in the nation. American Indian students (and educators) are concentrated in the northeastern quadrant of Oklahoma, the state with the highest number of Native Americans (American Indians and Alaska Natives), according to the 1990 Census. Green Country School is located about 25 miles from Tahlequah, home of the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma, the second-largest tribe within the boundaries of the U.S. Here the Trail of Tears, the forced journey in the early 1800s of Indian tribes from the eastern United States to Oklahoma, ended.

In September 1992, the Southwest Educational Development Laboratory (SEDL) selected Green Country School for a case study of leadership and school improvement. Out of a total of 512 students in the 1994–95 school year, 75 percent participated in the free or reduced-price lunch program, and 82 percent were American Indian. Sixty-six percent of the staff were American Indian as well (mostly of Cherokee descent). According to school staff, virtually all of the students were at risk.

Green Country School was a "dependent school," a school whose graduates attend high school in a different district. Oklahoma has 118 dependent schools and 432 K–12 independent districts. The head of a dependent school holds the title of superintendent rather than that of principal; and the school board has three members. The hallmark of Green Country's board was its stability; one person had served on the board for more than 30 years. The current board president had been on the board for 22 years. Like his father before him, he had attended Green Country School, and his children were students there as well. School staff were unanimously positive about the board, complimenting its members for their stability, focus on students, and positive, "can do" attitude.

Farming and the dairy and poultry industries were prominent in the area, and some of Green Country's staff maintained farms or ranches. Under the leadership of a visionary superintendent who took over in 1968, Green Country School overcame many of the problems that tend to plague rural schools: a lack of resources, high staff turnover, and low student performance. In 1992 SEDL began tracing the development of the school, particularly since the early 1980s, and identified several leadership strategies that helped to make Green Country what it is today. These strategies are best understood within the context of long-term school change at the school.

History of School Change

Green Country School began as a two-room schoolhouse, established shortly after the turn of the century. After Oklahoma became a state in 1907, the school was moved to its present site and renamed. The wood-frame school was replaced in 1939 by a Work Projects Administration (WPA) building, which was torn down in 1976. Campus facilities have been expanded or remodeled many times since about 1957.

The superintendent began teaching in 1953 in a one-room school with 28 students in eight grades; by necessity he learned the value of peer coaching and heterogeneous grouping. He worked in a nearby school district from 1963 until 1968, when that district was consolidated with Green Country. At the time of consolidation, Green Country had just four teachers. In addition to teaching, he had coached various athletic teams, with considerable success. From coaching he learned that physical activity reinforces cognitive skills and retention. To teach how the planets rotate in our solar system, for example, he assigned each student the role of a different planet, with one student standing in the center like the sun. After rotating around the "sun" in dynamic relationship to each other, the students could associate the different planets with the children who role-played those planets. Thus, the activity reinforced retention of the concepts learned. Many of the school's facilities reflected the superintendent's coaching background and his belief that physical activity promotes academic learning. Facilities that had been added since he assumed leadership of the consolidated district in 1968 included the gymnasium, the darkroom, the preschool, the psychomotor center, the swimming pool, tennis courts, the nature trail, and, most recently, the family literacy center. Classrooms had also been added at different times, including a new wing of six classrooms constructed for the 1994–95 school year. With old facilities remodeled to accommodate new functions and new facilities attached to the original building, the school evolved in a gradual patchwork fashion.

The superintendent purports to be one of the first educators to recognize the learning styles of American Indian students. Early in his tenure, he distinguished between left-brain and right-brain learning styles, theorizing that the right-brain style was more common among Indian children. In other words, verbal instructional methods were not as effective with these children as visual, auditory, or kinesthetic modalities were. Thus, he envisioned a psychomotor program that would reinforce language concepts through visual and auditory cues, as well as body movement. With a sizable grant received in the early 1980s, the superintendent and four other educators collaborated to develop such a program. An old cafeteria was remodeled to become the psychomotor center in 1980.

The school invited a university professor who was renowned for her research on learning and brain functions to visit the school. She asked teachers to identify six of their "most challenging" students—students they had given up on. She then involved these students in her training for teachers. In the short span of an afternoon, the students were learning and showing enthusiasm for learning. Evidently this training made a lasting impression on the teachers, because they seemed generally confident that they could work well with their pupils, citing examples of their success with students who were initially difficult. One group of siblings, remarked one teacher, were having difficulty at home but "doing wonderfully at school." Although staff considered their students at risk, the vast majority of the staff had positive attitudes about the students. "We want our kids to achieve their full potential" and "We want to do our best for the children" were typical of the attitudes expressed about students.

Like the superintendent, the teachers believed that right-brain learning styles were common among Indian children. They emphasized the importance of adapting instruction to different learning styles, and Green Country's many facilities and programs made it easier to cater to each student's particular style. A variety of equipment was available, including manipulatives for the psychomotor center, puppets, the darkroom, a mathematics and computer lab, a computer in every classroom, and Cherokee literature in the library. There was even a kitchen, mentioned earlier, and a music room with a piano, ten or more keyboards, earphones, and other music paraphernalia. The only need for additional equipment that was identified by staff concerned automation and networking capabilities for the library.

Staff unanimously articulated a clear focus on students. "We focus on the individual child" is the shared purpose that is voiced repeatedly, in one way or another, at the school. In the words of one teacher, "Everything we do is focused on making these students more successful in school and in life." Staff stressed the importance of fostering self-esteem and promoting pride in one's culture or heritage. Some teachers, teacher assistants, and students were bilingual, able to speak both Cherokee and English. Cultural enrichment focused on the Cherokee culture. First graders, for example, learned to create clay pots, say a chant in Cherokee while jumping rope, and play Cherokee games. At the psychomotor center, students learned to say numbers, colors, letters of the alphabet, and other words in both English and Cherokee, so that all students had a chance to shine regardless of which language was more natural for them.

Green Country's students, stated one teacher, responded well to this kind of bilingual, bicultural approach to instruction. To illustrate, she talked about a kindergarten student who did not speak English well when he first came to the school. Although he actively resisted school, the teacher was able to sit down and get acquainted with him. The boy excelled at the daily opening exercises, which always included the Cherokee color words, and the teacher's assistant, who spoke both Cherokee and English, worked with him on counting and other skills. She also created a new bilingual display on the bulletin board every month. Gradually this bilingual approach "really blossomed him out." Other approaches, including summer school enrichment, a Foster Grandparent or "Granny" program in which older women tutor up to three children individually, and an after-school youth tutoring program, all helped to individualize instruction.

But a broader shared purpose of Green Country School was to serve the community as well. Having grown up in the area, the superintendent and many staff well understood the community and its needs. They believed the school should be a community center, offering resources not otherwise available in this poor, rural area. "Adult classes are really good for this community," one person remarked. For this reason, classes, tutoring, and facilities were all available both to students and to members of the community. "Parents are involved with the school at all times," said one teacher. "At 10:00 p.m. you will find community members at the school." One of the program directors asserted that being the center of the community facilitated school improvement. Thus, staff believed that serving the community ultimately benefited the school as well.

Leadership Strategies

The superintendent was the driving force for change. He had several leadership strategies for effecting change and achieving steady improvement, many of which involved the community in school affairs:

1. Securing and managing grants to supplement the school's limited general revenue fund
2. Obtaining input through surveys and committees to determine the community's priorities
3. Following through to implement the community's ideas
4. Organizing special events to which the community is invited

5. Providing community education programs and other services to the community
6. Planning for the long-term and managing money wisely for future initiatives.

Grantsmanship

The first and most striking leadership strategy at Green Country was the impressive use of grants to supplement the school district's tax base, which was small because of the poverty and the large amount of non-taxable land in the area. This strategy appeared to have taken hold during the quest to develop the psychomotor program. Three initial grant applications to develop the program were denied. The Cherokee Nation offered the school a grant of $40,000, but the superintendent did not accept it, on the grounds that it was not enough for the psychomotor program he envisioned. Encouraged by the four educators with whom he collaborated, he finally won a sizable grant in 1981 through Title VII, a federal funding source. Under the grant the school developed the psychomotor program in three phases: for grades K–3 first, for grades 4–6 next, and for grades 7–8 last. The curriculum guides developed for the program then were still in use.

After just one year, the test scores for grades K–3 improved dramatically, not only in language but also in mathematics. The improvement in mathematics surprised staff, because they had not targeted mathematics during the first phase of the program. Because test scores showed that the program worked best with the younger students, the psychomotor center was later used primarily for children from preschool through the second grade.

After competing successfully for the Title VII grant for the psychomotor center, staff became proficient at securing other Title VII grants on a regular basis. They later obtained a Title VII grant for bilingual language development through creative writing, and the curriculum guide they completed in 1986–87 under that grant (they subsequently developed a second curriculum guide on the same topic) was still in use at the time of this study. A "hands-on" mathematics and science program was funded through Title VII beginning in the 1991–92 school year. And during the 1994–95 school year, Green Country was the only school in the country that received *three* Title VII grants.

The language development program was later funded by Title V, a program of formula grants available from the Office of Indian Education, U.S. Department of Education.[1] Green Country also used federal funds from the Johnson O'Malley (JOM) program, which was administered by the Bureau of Indian Affairs through contracts with public schools and other entities (like Green Country) that serve Native American students. The JOM parent committee initiated a youth tutoring program in the 1992–93 school year, after committee members attended a workshop where they heard about another school using youth as tutors. To fund the program, the school applied for and received a noncompetitive JOM grant, and preference was given in the hiring process to tutors who were Native American. Three out of four children receiving tutoring were Native American as well.

Two administrators were employed to manage the grant programs, although they also had other duties. The school subscribed to the *Federal Register* so that these administrators could keep abreast of the latest funding opportunities. They pursued new grants continuously, although they realized that only one out of about four or five might be funded. For the 1992–93 school year, for example, Green Country submitted a proposal for a Title V parent involvement program for preschoolers in which books, computers, and other resources were to be loaned out to the parents. Since the request for proposals stipulated that the parents had to pay for services received, the parents were to "pay" with their volunteer time. Unfortunately, the proposal was not funded. Also because of a lack of funding, pre-school was discontinued for three-year-olds, although it was still maintained for four-year-olds.

When a proposal was not funded, staff sought feedback to understand why, and they kept the proposal on file in case it might become useful in the future. A year after the proposal for the parent involvement program was denied as a Title V grant, staff revised it and submitted it again, not to Title V but rather to Title VII. This time Green Country won the grant, and the program commenced in the 1993–94 school year.

In addition to various federal grants, Green Country obtained grants from the state, a local university, a nonprofit corporation, and the Cherokee Nation. One competitive grant from the state supported a program called Oklahoma Parents as Teachers. OPAT was designed to maximize children's overall development during the first three years of life by helping parents be more effective in their role as the children's first teachers. First funded in the 1993–94 school year and continued thereafter on a year-by-year basis, OPAT offered workshops for parents at school while on-site child care was provided. The program coordinator also conducted home visits to provide individualized assistance to parents with children 0–3 years old. Another program that was first funded in the 1993–94 school year was Great Expectations, an approach used successfully with inner-city youth in Chicago by educator Dr. Marva Collins. Although the teaching techniques in this program were traditional, with much repetition and memorization, classroom protocol and recitations put unusual emphasis on treating children with respect, fostering high self-esteem, and instilling a sense of personal choice and responsibility for the direction their lives will take. Green Country was one of several schools in the area that participated in this program, which was supported by a private foundation but administered by a nearby university.

In the words of one outside person, Green Country pursued and received "every grant possible." Staff were so proficient at obtaining grants that the proportion of the school's general fund that came from federal sources was 20 percent, compared to 4 percent for a similar district and a statewide average of just 7 percent (Oklahoma Office of Accountability, December 1994). As a result, the school had numerous programs and facilities that it could not have otherwise afforded. The superintendent was proud of the fact that he had never proposed a bond package, which might impose a hardship on this poor community. The only bond issue ever voted for Green Country was for $15,000 in 1957; it was paid off in 1967, a year before the superintendent took over.

Schools wanting to improve their ability to obtain grants for new programs or facilities might keep in mind several points. First, a school must monitor the availability of grants by reviewing sources of information, like the *Federal Register*, that announce requests for proposals and grant opportunities from private and government agencies at the national, state, or local levels. Second, a school may wish to concentrate on developing its familiarity with the procedures and requirements of one particular funding source. For Green Country School, that source was Title VII because of its emphasis on language development. Third, a school should expect to develop its skills in grantsmanship over time. While it is easy to get discouraged when a proposal is not selected for funding, the school must view it as an investment, seek feedback to learn from the experience, and then persevere by preparing subsequent applications.

Input Through Surveys and Committees

Although the superintendent was the driving force for change, obtaining input, the second strategy, was key to the decision-making process. Many changes were made to the school in response to input from staff, students, parents, and the community. Staff reported that the school had surveys "all the time," and many of the programs and facilities were developed "because of a survey." The preschool, for example, was designed for working parents and for children who needed it to better prepare them for first grade. In one particular needs assessment, conducted every year, staff, parents, and upper-grade (5th through 8th grade) students received a list of possible programs or facilities that the school could develop, and they were asked to rank them according to what they wanted the school to pursue. The results were presented to the board, and then staff followed through on the board's decisions. For example, the school instituted a program called Transitional First (T1) for children who were not ready for first grade for a variety of reasons, such as being born late in the year. The school developed "T1" because a survey indicated that parents viewed the program as a high priority. Although T1 was later discontinued, the school maintained the program's basic approach of tailoring first-grade instruction to students' developmental needs by offering different first-grade programs.

Students in the upper grades received not only the annual needs assessment but also various *ad hoc* surveys, which might be used to determine the topics for workshops or classes or to guide the development of grant proposals. Students, stressed one staff member, love to do surveys. Because many students expressed an interest in photography, Green Country set aside space for a darkroom and supplied it with all the equipment needed to develop photographs. While most of the surveys sought the input of staff, students, and parents, a few were designed for former students and other members of the community. Community members also had an opportunity to submit suggestions at the annual open house and other special activities. Many of the school's programs and facilities were developed because staff, students, and the community gave them high priority.

Much was accomplished through committees: committees for the federally funded programs, a staff development committee, and an ad hoc committee for each special event, like the Kids' Safety Fair and the Harvest Carnival. One faculty member commented that he was put on a committee soon after he came to this school, in contrast to his previous school, where he "hadn't been on a committee in 15 years." Parents had the opportunity, through a survey, to volunteer for several committees, and the Johnson O'Malley Committee was composed of parents only. To hire new staff a fairly even mix of administrators, teachers, and parents would comprise an employment screening committee, which narrowed the selection down to three; the superintendent and the board selected from the three applicants to make the final choice. Parents and business

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representatives served on the curriculum committee, and one example of a committee that involved former students was the discipline committee.

Many schools understand the importance of input and shared decision making, and their advisory committees often include a few parents or community members. Schools might wish to conduct surveys more frequently, however, so that staff come to view them as a vehicle for change, as they did at Green Country. Depending on the question that a survey is designed to address, a school may wish to seek the perspectives of not only staff and parents but also of students, former students, and certain other sectors of the community. Like Green Country, some schools must keep in mind that surveys are not necessarily appropriate for obtaining input from those whose proficiency in English is limited. Community education programs and community use of school facilities, however, naturally generate opportunities for informal input and dialogue about school matters.

Follow-Through

When staff talked about the surveys, they stressed the importance of follow-through, the third effective strategy. Transitional First, the preschool, the darkroom, and the swimming pool were just a few of many examples of the cycle of input and follow-through in the history of change at Green Country. One of the earliest examples was the baseball diamond, while one of the most recent examples was the computer lab. Because the school had followed through over the years on the results of its surveys, people had confidence that the information from the surveys was really used in planning future improvements for the school. Over time, the people of the school witnessed changes to the school that reflected their input; many took credit for suggesting the ideas that the school had implemented.

During the course of this case study, SEDL observed several examples of follow-through. For example, the superintendent heard about Drug Abuse Resistance Education (D.A.R.E.) from a nearby school district in October 1992 during one of SEDL's site visits. He planned to "get on it right away" and immediately collaborated with the highway patrol to train an officer to provide the program services. By February 1993 when SEDL next visited Green Country School, a local patrolman had been certified in the program, and D.A.R.E. sessions had begun for the kindergarten, third, and fifth grades. The officer continued to present D.A.R.E. to students in these grades twice a week thereafter.

Modifications to the school facilities that were on the "drawing board" when SEDL staff visited Green Country would be completed by the time SEDL conducted its next site visit. On one particular visit, for example, the superintendent mentioned that he wanted to build a new wing with offices and a board room; the next time SEDL staff visited the school, the wing had become reality, and he mentioned plans for a new wing of classrooms. On a subsequent visit, these new classrooms, too, were in full use, and the superintendent was planning a family literacy center. Four months later, when SEDL visited Green Country again, Green Country had a fully-functioning family literacy center.

If a school contemplates conducting a survey or obtaining input by other means, its resolve to follow through on the results must be strong from the beginning. There is little point in obtaining input by any means if the results are allowed to fall by the wayside because of pressing demands that arise later. For this reason, the school should have a follow-through plan and then stick to it.

Special Events

The fourth leadership strategy was to conduct special events that were open to other schools and to the community. The annual Kids' Safety Fair, for example, was attended by students and staff from several nearby schools. Booths at the fair provided information on dental hygiene, snakebites, how to use 911, and other topics, while policemen and firefighters staged several mock rescue operations. Even a helicopter flew in from a hospital in Tulsa. The school held monthly community parties, usually with a theme—such as "50s Night." These parties attracted not only students and parents but also their relatives and friends. Ticket sales at the Harvest Carnival on Halloween and balloon sales on Valentine's Day were Green Country's biggest fund-raisers, but dinners and tournaments also brought in revenue.

A Heritage Club was established during the 1991–92 school year. In grades 3–8, students elected the Heritage Club's chief and vice-chief, who had to be Indian. The Heritage Club organized cultural events, such as the JOM talent show and cultural awareness days. Other events were the Thanksgiving Dinner, 4-H Rally, Health Fair, and Science Fair, all of which were held annually. Track meets, ball games, a karate exhibition, and other athletic activities were other ways that the school involved the community. Use of the school's facilities was high, partly because similar facilities were not available anywhere else in the community. This was one reason why Green Country strived to be a community center.

Many schools have special events, but not as frequently as Green Country. For a school to organize so many social or educational activities, it is helpful to have a couple of people—staff or volunteers—who excel at organizing and managing all the details associated with these events. Students can help, too, as can outside agencies. Green Country involves as many as 15–20 agencies in the Kids' Safety Fair. In general, special events draw attention to the needs of the school, help build a sense of community, and foster pride in the school.

Services to the Community

The fifth leadership strategy for involving the community was to provide services to the community. Green Country opened its facilities to the public early and late in the day and offered a variety of community education programs. Certain parents had a key to the building, and there were no fences to keep people out—although for safety, a fence around the preschool kept the small children in. Many people took advantage of the school's swimming pool, nature trail, computer lab, and other facilities. During the 1994–95 school year, Green Country began allowing parents to check out computers for one week at a time, and opened up a family literacy center. Computer classes, crafts, water aerobics, life-guard training, self-defense classes, and Little League all drew the community to the school.

In collaboration with a foundation based in Tulsa, the school offered "arthritis swim," a class for people who suffered arthritis. The foundation, which proposed the idea to Green Country partly because it had a swimming pool, trained an instructor at Green Country to teach the class. The school also collaborated with a nearby vocational school to provide classes.

Green Country developed a curriculum on the prevention of child abuse and neglect, after obtaining a competitive grant in 1986 from the Oklahoma Health

Department. Although funding decreased each year thereafter, the school was able to hire a coordinator to develop the curriculum in collaboration with social workers from local service agencies and with personnel from Northeastern State University in Tahlequah. A county task force was established, and training was provided for agencies (including a community college) throughout the county. Green Country's coordinator went with staff from the local child protective services agency to every school in the county that accepted their offer to conduct two-hour workshops for the school on issues related to abuse and neglect. Each year, this program, which entailed a minimum of six seminars, focused on a different but related topic, such as parent training. Green Country was invited to highlight this program at three successive national conferences on child abuse and neglect.

Rural schools may be more interested in Green Country's strategy of community service than schools in urban areas, where services are more widely available from various agencies or organizations. A school may wish to start by opening its doors one evening a week so that people can use the building or facilities. Often grants are available to fund services to the community, but, if not, a school may be able to find parents or community members who are willing to serve as instructors, organize workshops, or volunteer their time in other ways that benefit the community. Social activities may be needed at first to build commitment to the expansion of the school's role in the community. On an ongoing basis, the school must administer surveys or other mechanisms for determining which services are most needed or wanted by the community and for soliciting assistance with providing these services.

Long-Range Planning and Money Management

According to the long-time president of the school board, the board gave the staff as much leeway as possible, and it assumed responsibility for determining how their ideas would be funded either in the immediate future or over the long-term. Although Green Country relied on moneys earmarked for Indian education, these funds were sometimes supplemented with money from other sources so that all students had the same opportunities. Every student, for example, could elect to receive free piano lessons, which were supported by a combination of Indian and non-Indian education funds. Similarly, breakfast and lunch programs were supplemented so that all students, not just those who were income-eligible, received free meals.

The perfect example of Green Country's successful strategic planning was the way it planned for and acquired a swimming pool. The annual survey to assess the community's priorities indicated repeatedly that the community wanted a swimming pool and swimming instruction. Since the area included many rivers and lakes, the idea of a swimming pool had merit for safety as well as recreational reasons, but Green Country could not afford one. Over a period of approximately five years, however, the board accumulated enough in the general revenue fund to finance the construction of the swimming pool.

Not surprisingly, the board used federal and state funds as much as possible before drawing from the general revenue fund. It is imperative for school administrators to become intimately familiar with the restrictions that apply to each source of funds and to use restricted funds whenever possible, so that more flexible funds are available for other purposes. In its own list of accomplishments, Green Country claimed to be the "first in our area" to have "an in-school bonded treasurer which allows for better management of funds." This underscored how important the superintendent thought it was to have someone in-house—whether it be a bonded treasurer or not—who closely monitored the flow of funds in and out of the school and who planned for the future needs of the school.

Climate for Change

Grants, surveys, committee input, and the emphasis on follow-through created a healthy climate for change at Green Country School. Staff expected the school to adjust to the changing needs of students and the community. In addition to surveys, the school used test scores to determine where improvement was needed. As one person explained, "We give [the Iowa Test of Basic Skills] to the whole school, starting at kindergarten, because that helps us to know what we need to improve on."

Staff described the superintendent variously as "motivated," "aggressive," "innovative," and "proactive." One program director stated, "He leads by example." According to many staff, most new ideas came from the superintendent, but if one of his staff proposed an idea to him, he usually encouraged the person to try it. The idea for the Kids' Safety Fair, for example, came from another program director and won his full support. Although the superintendent encouraged new ideas, he clearly expected to approve an idea before staff proceeded to implement it. Other sources of new ideas included conferences and programs from other districts.

When asked if things had been tried that were not successful, staff members typically answered "Not that I know of" or "I can't think of anything." A German class was about the only example that was mentioned. As one person explained, ideas that do not work out are simply dropped. There was virtually no negativity, yet certain people saw room for growth and improvement. The surveys, committees, use of test scores, and frequent changes all indicated a climate of critical inquiry, and the school's ability to obtain grants enabled it to follow up on new ideas.

Human Resources

The school attracted good staff because of its excellent reputation, and the salaries were among the highest in the county, so turnover was not a problem. People who spoke the Cherokee language were available from the community, and Green Country hired some of them as teacher assistants to help meet the cultural needs of the students. In his role as a coach, the superintendent had already pulled people from the community to help with sports, so he naturally viewed the community as a resource for the school.

One staff member mentioned that the superintendent's record as a coach was excellent and that he applied his coaching skills to his administrative work. One of his talents appeared to be the ability to perceive the strengths and weaknesses of people. The superintendent thought about people in terms of categories—like left-brain and right-brain or dominant and supportive—that complemented each other. He surrounded himself with people, including four former superintendents, who had a wide variety of experiences. He emphasized hiring the right people, and he looked for individuals who had specific talents. He delegated responsibilities, then gave his staff free rein to do their work. It was clear to staff, however, that he expected them "to do their jobs." In interviews, the staff did not emphasize formal monitoring so much as this climate of expectations. Several teachers commented that people voluntarily pitched in or that "everyone is willing to do their share of extra duties."

Working Relationships

According to staff, the teachers at Green Country worked well together and enjoyed the school's family atmosphere. It was interesting to note, however, that the school had no teachers' lounge. Staff congregated around the administrative offices or the school cafeteria, where they ate breakfast together. Unlike many other schools, there was plenty of space if staff members needed a place to talk or meet informally.

The superintendent was reportedly an "easy man to talk to" and "a good listener," and he "helps you in every way that he can." According to some staff, he had an "open door policy," and teachers felt comfortable talking to him in his office, in the school cafeteria, or elsewhere, not only about ideas but also about problems.

Beginning in the 1992–93 school year, monthly administrative meetings were open to more staff, and the time of the meetings was staggered so that staff could attend at least some of the meetings, regardless of when they had their conference periods. During the 1994–95 school year, the school day was lengthened on Monday through Thursday, and students were dismissed early on Friday, so that teachers could have more time to plan for the following week.

Staff conveyed an eagerness to learn from each other. One teacher, for example, mentioned two other teachers whom she enjoyed watching. "I love to watch him teach," she said about one of them. "He teaches...and he motivates them and I love it. He gets them excited." She went on to say that "over the years you build up [new skills] and then when new teachers come they borrow from you and it's wonderful." Each first-year teacher was assigned a consultant teacher who introduced the new teacher to the school and its rules and explained how the school system worked.

Staff expressed positive feelings about their colleagues, about the leaders of the school, and about the community. The community, in turn, expressed tremendous confidence and pride in the school. "The most important thing in this community is Green Country School," wrote one parent on a questionnaire. "Parents and community members in general have the highest regards for the school and feel it is a super school," wrote another. The long tenure of the superintendent, low turnover of staff, and long-term stability of the school board facilitated school improvement. Another positive factor was the superintendent's good relationships with high-level officials at the state department of education, the Cherokee Nation, and elsewhere. He served on a few advisory committees for these organizations.

Special Skills

The superintendent had considerable skill in construction and other "contractor" work, which appeared to facilitate change. For example, other schools must hire a manager to oversee land acquisition, remodeling, new construction, or equipment installation, but at Green Country the superintendent did much of this himself. Whereas other schools might shy away from undertaking complex projects such as installing a television studio, the superintendent had confidence that he would accomplish the task successfully. The board president, an electrician by trade and a farmer, also helped with this type of work.

Effects of External Factors on Improvement

Because of the poverty and large American Indian population in the area, Green Country was able to obtain many grants that would not have been available to other schools. While vision and a quest for continual improvement drove change at the school, grants constituted the school's primary means of supporting the programs and facilities that realized that vision.

Other factors external to the school facilitated or impeded improvement as well. Some staff expressed positive feelings about the state's focus on learner-based outcomes and its limits on class size in elementary schools. On the other hand, the staff also cited certain state or federal policies as barriers to improvement. One of these was a state regulation that capital outlay moneys could not come from the general fund. This restriction put pressure on districts to obtain such moneys from their communities through bonds, but the superintendent deliberately avoided issuing bonds because of the poverty in the community. Other state regulations (such as the format for teacher evaluations, and the extent of paperwork and documentation required) were also cited as impediments.

When asked to identify factors that impede school improvement, the board president mentioned two: First, state mandates imposed on the school with no provision of state funds to meet the cost of implementing those mandates. Second, envy in the community. Although Green Country invited the community to use its facilities before and after school and to attend its special events, a few nearby schools in this impoverished rural area refused to take advantage of these opportunities, perhaps because of jealousy or resentment. The board attempted to foster collaboration between Green Country and another local school with some success—between both schools' mathematics programs, for example. But the board wanted to see more collaboration. Even more important, school leaders encountered opposition from certain factions within the community when they tried to expand the school's grade levels to include high school. During the 1994–95 school year, when Green Country's board voted in favor of adding the 9th grade, certain groups put intense political pressure on legislators. This resulted in a law that prevented the school from expanding, even though other factions within the community had pushed for the expansion.

Summary

A school with a large population of at-risk students must have a vision of how at-risk students learn. Staff repeatedly described their students as right-brain or visual learners, and Green Country accumulated resources designed to teach students with various learning styles. Among the many facilities and programs, the psychomotor center best illustrated three of the school's guiding principles: (1) instruction must be individually tailored to suit the student's particular learning style, (2) learning should be active and fun, and (3) physical activity enhances academic learning and retention. Another guiding principle was that the school should offer the same opportunities to all students, even though many funding sources targeted only those students who met certain criteria. The school gave older students the responsibility of producing a television show every day and the opportunity to develop photographs in a darkroom. The after-school tutoring program gave older students from the local high school, including Green Country graduates, the responsibility of tutoring younger students, providing more individualized attention to these younger students than would otherwise be possible.

Successful leadership strategies included the impressive use of grants to secure resources; community involvement through surveys and committees; special events; community education programs and other services to the community; and long-range strategic planning and excellent money management. Staff regarded the superintendent as a visionary leader who was the primary source of ideas for school improvement. He assigned to staff members specific areas of responsibility, and then gave them autonomy in their work. His "open door policy" encouraged staff to discuss ideas and problems with him. Although he gave staff the freedom to do their work, he clearly expected them to work hard and to seek his approval before trying something new. He fostered a collegial, "family" atmosphere in which staff worked well together, learned from each other, voluntarily took on extra duties, and constantly tried new things to make the school better.

Three factors appeared to account for Green Country's enthusiasm for new ideas. First, staff interacted a great deal with the community, getting many of their ideas from community members. The superintendent also got ideas from other educators throughout the state and nation. Second, Green Country was receptive to new ideas in part because it was excellent at following through with them. Third, the school's resources attracted interest from other organizations that wanted to collaborate with Green Country School.

The superintendent believed that the psychomotor program was the main reason the school was recognized as a National School of Excellence in 1988. In addition to the awards won by the school, the superintendent himself had won numerous leadership awards, including the Cherokee Nation Award for Leadership in Indian Education. He was inducted into the Oklahoma Educators' Hall of Fame in 1991 and received a Leadership Award and Citation of Merit from his alma mater.

On one of SEDL's site visits to Green Country School, the superintendent shared his thoughts on leadership in a handwritten note:

> Good leaders are visionary. They look further over the hill into the future, establish goals based on that farsightedness, and move backward from it to help create the future. They are not afraid to dream, imagine, and take risks. They add depth and breadth to their vision by articulating a clear sense of direction.
>
> A leader imagines possible achievements by conceptualizing a specific future, sees each part's relationship to the whole organization, and most important, sees the relationship of the organization to the environment.
>
> A leader needs the capacity to provide the emotional glue that binds leaders to followers.
>
> (Superintendent, February 3, 1993)

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[1] Title V was recently renamed Title IX.

Oklahoma: Pressure and Support at Road's End School

Oklahoma, like many states, has mandated incentives and sanctions to challenge and support schools. This case study examines a school that had been declared academically at risk and its progress in improving student performance. When selected as a research site in 1992, Road's End School was the only one of the five original research sites to face the threat of state intervention for poor performance.

According to Senate Bill 183, enacted in 1989, Oklahoma had defined two unsatisfactory performance levels for schools at the time of this study. If a school's test scores fell below a specified percentile level, the school was declared "low-performing," and if a school was "low performing" for three consecutive years, it was declared "academically at risk." Interventions to ensure the proper education of students in at-risk schools could include (but were not limited to) guidance and assistance to the school and the school district; special funding; reassignment of district personnel; transfer of students; transfer of the operation of the school to State Department of Education personnel; and mandatory consolidation of all or part of the local school district into another district.

Since Road's End School had been declared "academically at risk," its staff worried that it might be absorbed into a neighboring school district. This pressure provided the impetus for change. Counterbalancing this pressure was support from several sources, including support from within the school, expertise and financial support from outside the district, and the state's special funding for at-risk schools. The goal of the case study for this site was to examine the leadership strategies used to implement changes at the Oklahoma school, within the context of the pressure and support impinging on the school from several directions.

The School and the Community

Road's End School was a rural K–12 school in the southeastern quadrant of Oklahoma, in a district covering a little more than 100 square miles. The road leading to town was paved, but the paving ended in town, leaving only dirt roads in the local area. Despite its small size, the town had two churches and a post office that served as its principal employer. With no visible business sector except a small cafe, the community appeared to be in economic decline. The agricultural sector produced primarily watermelons, peanuts, and soybeans, and work in the fields was a source of income for many students' families. For shopping and medical attention, people traveled to a larger town several miles away. Small as it was, however, the town boasted a celebrity nationally known in country music circles, whose child attended Road's End School.

A total of 122 students, pre-K to 12th grade, were housed in a one-story building, with a few portables providing additional space. The size of the 1991 graduating class was five. Constructed in the early 1940s, the building was old and inadequate in many ways. Regardless of the weather, students had to walk outside to get to the cafeteria. There was no teachers' lounge. Because space was limited, the special education teacher had to work with individual students in the multipurpose room, which was sometimes used simultaneously for other activities, such as computer instruction or in-school detention.

With the exception of the first and second grades, all classes were multilevel. Although the elementary and secondary grades sat at opposite ends of the same hallway, technically they were two schools with separate principals. Because the district was small, however, the administrators had dual roles: the elementary school principal was also the district superintendent, and the high school principal was also a counselor. In addition to these two administrators, there were eleven regular teachers, three specialized teachers, the equivalent of 5.5 aides, and a small number of other full- and part-time staff, for a total of nearly 27 FTEs (full-time equivalents). The ethnic makeup of the students in the two schools was roughly the same: 51 percent Anglo-American, 37 percent American Indian, and 12 percent African-American. The elementary school staff members were 80 percent Anglo-American and 20 percent American Indian. In the high school, all were Anglo-American.

Many of the faculty, including the superintendent, traveled between 20 and 40 miles (one way), every day, to school. Despite its remote location, the school attracted competent faculty, many of whom held master's degrees obtained from colleges and universities throughout the state. Some of the high school teachers had taught at the school for some time, but nearly all of the elementary school teachers were in their first or second year of teaching. One first-grade teacher, however, had taught for 22 years.

Pressure for Change

Fullan (1991) maintains that educational change occurs through "interactive pressure and support, initiative-taking and empowerment through coordinated action" (p. 211). A major pressure for change at Road's End came in 1990 just as the new superintendent came on board for the 1990–91 school year. The elementary school was classified by the state as "academically at risk" because it had been on the state's list of low-performing schools for three years. Also in 1990, the high school was classified as low-performing for the first time. This meant that at least one of the grades scored below both the 25th percentile statewide and below the 50th percentile nationally on standardized tests. Road's End School was under pressure to change.

When the new superintendent took over, he found that the previous administration had not shared test results with the faculty and had not informed them of the district's at-risk status. After he disseminated this information, the faculty resolved to do what they could to improve students' performance, including giving up a day of their Thanksgiving break to receive training on effective schools. Faced with the prospect of closure or consolidation, the faculty, especially the elementary staff, accepted responsibility and began thinking of how they might address the issue of school improvement.

Openness to change was prevalent among the teachers. Four were first-year teachers, and the superintendent considered their newness an advantage in this circumstance because "they weren't used to doing things in a certain way." Since most teachers were teaching two grades in a single classroom, they were eager for any ideas and suggestions that would help them in their instruction. Over and over, different staff members spoke of their willingness to try new things.

Leadership Strategies

Supporting Change with Resources

Funding for innovations is essential because change requires training, substitute teachers, new materials, space, and time. Change is "resource-hungry" because it involves learning new skills and solving complex problems in an already overloaded setting (Fullan and Miles, 1992, p. 750). Because Road's End had been identified as a low-performing school, it had access to a special pool of state funds to implement changes. The state department also notified at-risk schools in Oklahoma of the opportunity to apply for a grant of up to $10,000, to be awarded to a maximum of 25 schools, for a total of $250,000. The grant funds were available because of the efforts of a retired businessman named Charles Hollar from Ponca City. Mr. Hollar had encouraged the Oklahoma State Department of Education to endorse a program they offered training to schools on an approach to education called Great Expectation which had been developed by educator Dr. Marva Collins. To support the program financially, Mr. Hollar established a foundation, the Marva Collins Westside Preparatory School Foundation.

After mailing a short letter expressing interest in receiving a grant, Road's End School was selected for an interview. Four people went: the superintendent, the veteran first grade teacher, a second-year teacher who taught seventh and eighth grade in a multi-grade classroom, and a board member. Shortly afterward they learned that their school was one of 25 schools that would receive grants. Thus, the pressure on at-risk schools to improve was balanced with financial support. With grants from both the state department and a private foundation, the staff at Road's End School were able to receive training on several innovations.

Beginning Improvement with the Effective Schools Approach

With the grant from the Oklahoma State Department of Education designed to assist academically at-risk schools, the superintendent secured the help of the Director of the Center for the Study of Small/Rural Schools at the University of Oklahoma, to design and implement a school improvement plan based on the correlates of effective schools (Steller, 1988; Stedman, 1987; Mace-Matluck, 1987; Wehlage, 1983). The plan called for training, faculty committees, and an analysis of instruction. The instructional analysis identified the role of gender and ethnicity on teacher expectations and student achievement; and it assessed instruction in relation to the principles of mastery teaching and Madeline Hunter's model (Chance, 1991).

To implement the plan, the superintendent planned two days of in-service training addressing the correlates of effective schools, such as instructional leadership, instructional focus, high expectations, school climate, and measurable achievement. Staff from another school in Oklahoma, identified as a high-performing school, described the changes they had put in place based on the correlates of effective schools. All of the faculty at Road's End School eventually visited this other school, traveling in small groups of three to five. The Road's End teachers came away saying, "They aren't really doing anything that we can't do, so what is making the difference?"

Like the school they visited, Road's End established committees to improve different aspects of the school—aspects that were associated with the effective schools correlates. Each member of the faculty served on at least one correlate committee, and each committee was charged with making improvements in one of the following three areas: the school environment, high expectations, or instructional focus. The school environment, for example, was enhanced by adding sidewalks, gravel on the playground, and central air conditioning. Also, the library was remodeled to increase shelf space. The high expectations committee introduced "student of the week," "quote of the week," and "goal of the week," all to motivate the students.

Developing Staff's Instructional Strategies

To address instructional focus, the school offered teachers several different types of training, taking advantage of several professional development opportunities that helped to create a climate of enhanced productivity and innovation. One faculty member described the superintendent as "having a knack for identifying good training." Two types of training, in particular, had a significant impact on the teachers, especially in the elementary school: the Shurley Method and Marva Collins' Great Expectations approach. The latter training was funded by the private grant described earlier.

The Shurley Method provided teachers with new strategies for teaching language skills that made learning more fun for youngsters. First graders, for example, learned the different parts of speech through jingles. The teachers were excited about these new methods, because students became much more actively engaged and learned language skills at a much higher level than teachers previously thought possible.

Marva Collins's success with inner-city youth in Chicago led her to start her own exemplary school and training program. Training on her philosophy and teaching approach began for Road's End School at Central State University in Oklahoma. There an expert provided intensive training on communication and relationships to representatives from 25 Oklahoma schools. Each school sent four representatives, for a total of 100 educators. The superintendent likened this training to a "tent revival," referring to it as the most rewarding experience of his 25 years in education. The participants, who constituted a good mix of Anglo-American, African-American, and American Indian educators, formed close relationships with one another. A month later, the administrators of the 25 selected schools went to Chicago, where they spent the equivalent of two full days at Marva Collins's school.

Afterward, two teachers from Road's End School attended a week-long training institute in Chicago on the Marva Collins approach, with the understanding that they, in turn, would train the other faculty at their school (Chance, 1991). Supplied with videotapes and other materials from the training, they returned "all fired up" and shared their new knowledge with the others. The superintendent reported that they did not force the ideas on their colleagues, but most of the other teachers were receptive to them and eager to participate. Later, all the elementary teachers traveled to Oklahoma City to hear Marva Collins speak about her philosophy, teaching strategies, and success with students.

Although Marva Collins used traditional teaching techniques with a lot of repetition and memorization, she put unusual emphasis on high expectations, telling students they could excel academically, while she worked to improve their self-esteem. She developed their public speaking skills and fostered a sense of personal choice and responsibility. She emphasized to inner city students that they could choose the direction their lives would take: a life of drugs and crime or a life of success. Contrary to the prevailing paradigm that children are limited in what they can do, she challenged students to meet higher standards than were typically demanded of them. At the same time, she provided them with the necessary tools and support to enable them to do so.

Maintaining the Momentum

Barth (1991) asserts that school staff members "must *want* to work together; that is, you must have the *will*. And you must know *how* to work together; that is, you must have the *skill*" (p. 126). According to the superintendent, Marva Collins "changed the whole structure of the environment" for the staff. They were excited about the new teaching strategies they had learned, about trying them out in their classrooms, and about sharing ideas and information with each other.

In order to succeed in their efforts to change, schools must "create means for continual collegial inquiry (in which hard questions are posed regarding what needs to change in order for individual groups of students to succeed)" (Darling-Hammond, 1993, p. 760). Collegiality was especially noticeable among the elementary teachers, who characterized themselves as working well together as a team or family. They were willing to take risks and try new things because they felt supported by the elementary school principal (who was also the superintendent), with whom they interacted freely. However, the high school principal also noted how receptive the teachers were to suggestions, always looking for any ideas that would help them in their daily classroom experiences with their students.

Sustaining the Vision

The training that school staff received elevated their expectations of students. "Now, I have a more positive outlook on things," one staff member said. "My expectations have come way up." Teachers realized as never before that when learning is active and fun, students respond by performing at higher levels. "People made the commitment that they were not going to go back to the old style of teaching," another person reflected.

A veteran teacher noted that demonstrating a new approach was better than a lecture, and repeating training was better than giving it only once. She also mentioned that as time elapsed, she found herself forgetting exactly how to conduct her lessons according to the training she had received. The videotapes and manuals she had brought back with her were helpful in refreshing her understanding of the teaching techniques. Her experience suggests that materials (plus time to review them) help to ensure the continued implementation of a new teaching strategy learned through initial training, and that such materials can provide ongoing professional development at the precise time when a teacher may feel the need for a refresher.

On the other hand, materials cannot stand alone. "No matter how abundant and appealing materials may be, with most innovations teachers need training to understand clearly how to use them" (Hord, 1987, p. 76). It is the *combination* of (1) training, (2) materials, (3) practice, and (4) retraining, followed by (5) rewarding gains in student performance, that has long-lasting effects on teaching and learning.

Empowering Staff

The administrators and teachers communicated regularly in open, primarily informal meetings At other times, more formal all-faculty meetings were held. As a group, the staff grew closer because they were supporting each other and trying to give each other ideas. One administrator said, "If someone has a suggestion, I welcome it and if the staff thinks it is a good idea, and if they want to do it, I am all for it." He added that he often sought teachers' input, trying to keep communication channels open while prompting them to find their own answers. "I am only a piece of the puzzle," he concluded. "It takes all of us."

Under the new superintendent, teachers felt more empowered to learn and try new strategies. Several teachers described the contrast between the new superintendent and his predecessor, who had never shared the school's test results with them. The new superintendent assigned the responsibility of getting test scores to the faculty in an organized manner to three teachers, one in the elementary school, one in the high school, and one whose subject areas cut across both levels. Whereas his predecessors discouraged teachers from talking to one another, the new superintendent actively encouraged interaction among the teachers, making it possible for them to work as a team to improve the school's performance. The veteran teacher summed up the difference as follows: "Last year was my worst year of teaching; this year was my best."

With empowerment comes added responsibility. One administrator revealed a keen sense of personal responsibility by stating the following:

> As long as there are children in this school that are not succeeding, then I, as an administrative leader of the school, must identify the strategy or method that we are not using that will help children learn. There has to be a way of opening their eyes and making them realize that this is a great opportunity for them, and they must make the most of it.

His remarks reflect an openness to change. "If you can touch one kid," he added, "who knows what that kid will gain, maybe not immediately, but long-range down the road." The desire to make a difference in even just one child's life has immeasurable value.

Many problems with at-risk students can be attributed to low self-esteem—not believing in themselves. Several teachers acknowledged the importance of nurturing the students. One teacher asserted, "If you tell them that you love them and that they are bright and luminous constantly, they are going to believe it sooner or later." Another teacher revealed, "You just want to see them [students] succeed." At Road's End School it is accepted by staff that students come first. The reward for teachers was seeing changes in the students' beliefs and self-concepts.

Balancing Pressure and Support

There was no question that the original motivation for change was the threat of closing or consolidation. Counterbalancing this pressure, however, was the support received from the Oklahoma State Department of Education, a private foundation, and the University of Oklahoma. A report by the National Center for Research on Cultural Diversity and Second Language Learning describes school leaders who both support and pressure teachers in school change. Although the two roles appear to be at odds, researchers found that the skillful leader knows when to exercise one or the other, or both simultaneously (Goldenberg and Sullivan, 1995). The case study at Road's End supports this finding.

The new superintendent assumed a supportive role, arranging visits to another district, sharing critical information, providing staff development, and encouraging collaboration. However, in his eagerness to make needed changes, the new superintendent initiated so much that teachers at times felt overwhelmed.

Time is always an issue in the school improvement process. As is usually the case with schools, time for sharing, planning, and problem-solving was not carefully and deliberately scheduled but tacked on at the end of a busy day. "I may have put too much on them," the superintendent said, "because of our concern that too many things needed to be done." Acknowledging the willingness and positive attitudes of staff but also the demands that workshops and presentations put on their time, he went on to say, "I know that at times they felt 'here's something else being added that we have to contend with.' "

The veteran teacher independently affirmed that so much training on new approaches was too much all at once. She commented that it was good to concentrate on one new approach, such as Marva Collins's, to give it a chance to work. Her observation only serves to illustrate how difficult it can be to balance pressure with support.

Factors Affecting Improvement

Impediments to Improvement

Despite the small size of Road's End School, communication was less than ideal. In the past, the superintendent deliberately withheld information from faculty. There was little daily interaction between high school and elementary teachers even though they were in the same building. Communication suffered even though, and perhaps because, various staff members served dual roles. Most of the teachers were responsible for more than one grade. Although both the first- and second-grade classes were single-grade, all the rest were multi-level, causing most teachers to be responsible for more than one grade. The superintendent had the dual roles of superintendent and elementary school principal. The high school principal also served as the school counselor. The stress and time constraints that resulted from performing two functions simultaneously often interfered with the job of communicating in a timely manner with staff. Some teachers remarked that the dual leadership roles also inhibited free and open communication . Students sometimes found it difficult to confer about personal matters with the counselor when they knew he also served as the high school principal. Similarly, elementary teachers sometimes found it difficult to confer about school problems with their principal when they knew he was the superintendent as well.

Another area in need of improvement was communication with the community. The Native American Center had helped to educate the students on the cultures of different tribes and a dancers' group in Road's End had a repertoire available for presentations, but staff reported having a hard time involving the community in school activities. The school improvement plan called generally for more parent and community involvement with students' learning, but few specific strategies for enhancing involvement were identified or implemented.

Although Road's End was a small school district, the administrators found it more difficult to effect change in the high school than at the elementary level. In this respect, the district seemed no different from other districts of larger size. Especially limiting were negative attitudes attributed to some of the high school students and teachers. To counter the ever-present feeling of some that the school would close down, the high school principal tried constantly to instill within students and teachers more confidence in the viability of the school. He wanted the students to feel good about their school. "We try to find a way to work with those secondary teachers and students," said one of the administrators. "Although we are a district that is out in the boonies and we may not be able to offer a student everything because of our size, these kids have a far better opportunity to learn in this environment than in a bigger school." Thus, the leaders of Road's End School dealt with negative attitudes by stressing the school's strengths and advantages.

Finally, there was the challenge of motivating students, especially the high school students. One staff member described the students as "generally good kids, but mischievous at times." The incentive to perform well and graduate from school was reduced, according to others, because students believed they could always fall back on federal assistance. The teachers and administrators stressed to students the importance of getting an education, achieving things on one's own, going to college, and branching out to experience the world. As one teacher explained, she tried to get students to understand that "there is more to life than [Road's End], Oklahoma."

Factors Facilitating School Improvement

As noted earlier, another site replaced Road's End as the Oklahoma research site following the departure of the two administrators. However, in the short time that SEDL researchers observed this school, a great deal was learned about the initiation of change and the constructive strategies leaders use to implement change. While the Oklahoma system put pressure on the school to change, the Oklahoma State Department of Education balanced this pressure with financial support for improvements. With the improvement funds, the superintendent secured assistance from the University of Oklahoma to embark on a school improvement process based on the effective schools correlates. Faculty committees were established to improve three aspects of the school: the school environment, expectations, and instructional focus. To improve instructional focus, the superintendent arranged for several different types of staff development on teaching strategies. The most significant of these were the Shurley Method and Marva Collins's training. As a result of the training they received, teachers expected more of students and tried new methods—methods that more actively engaged students in their classrooms. Students responded by performing at higher levels. Excited about their new teaching techniques, teachers exchanged ideas with one another and interacted openly with the administrators. Teachers felt rewarded by the changes in students.

The external pressure for change also caused the superintendent to exert internal pressure for change, and to create an environment more conducive to change. In comparison to the previous administration, the new superintendent fostered an atmosphere of collegial exchange and empowerment that opened the way for further change to occur in response to the individual needs of students. He provided many types of support: providing critical information, opening up communication and interaction through a committee structure, arranging visits to other schools, and providing high-quality staff development.

The high school was removed from the state's list of low-performing schools in 1991, toward the end of the first year of the school's improvement efforts. In 1992, when the Southwest Educational Development Laboratory collected data from the school, staff expressed confidence that the performance of the elementary students had improved as well. Students were more engaged in learning, and performance levels were much higher than the faculty previously thought possible. "There is no question," said the superintendent, "that they have made outstanding gains." In the spring of 1992, when Road's End's second year of school improvement was drawing to a close, test results affirmed the superintendent's claim. The elementary school had succeeded in raising students' achievement scores enough to get the school off the state's list of low-performing and at-risk schools.

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Site Papers: Developmental Sites

Both developmental sites were high schools responding to an opportunity available at the state level, and both were located in impoverished regions. The majority of students at one school were African-American, while the majority of students at the other school were Hispanic. The two schools differed in their approach to school improvement: one chose a particular program to implement; the other chose to "re-culture" the school. Both received guidance and assistance from an external facilitator working with several schools participating in their particular initiative.

Arkansas: Implementing Ventures in Education at Delta High

Some of the poorest counties in the U.S. lie in the area known as the Lower Mississippi Delta, where one can still see signs of grinding poverty and racial segregation reminiscent of the 1950s. In one of the rural towns in southeastern Arkansas, a high school, which shall be called "Delta High," performed well in comparison to other nearby schools, but its graduates had difficulty competing successfully for scholarships and admission to colleges and universities. During the 1991–92 school year, to improve the school's curriculum, Delta High joined forces with a national organization and its Arkansas Project Director to implement a rigorous academic program called Ventures in Education (VIE). An accelerated curriculum, Ventures in Education required a student to take four years of English, social studies, mathematics, and science plus two years of other challenging courses, including a "foreign" language. Each student was assigned a faculty advisor. A VIE school received substantial guidance, support, and financial assistance from Ventures in Education, Inc., the national organization, or from its state project director, including training on new instructional strategies that emphasized hands-on learning, problem solving, and higher-order thinking skills.

VIE sounded promising to Delta High staff because it targeted low-income areas ranging from the northern inner city to the deep south. It had a ten-year proven track record with minority populations that included African-Americans, Hispanics, and American Indians on Arizona's Navajo reservation. "They've earned scholarships, and once they've gone to college, they have more than an 80 percent success rate," explained the principal, referring to students in schools where VIE had already been implemented. Delta High was one of seven schools to be the first in Arkansas to implement Ventures in Education.

SEDL conferred with the Arkansas Project Director of VIE to identify a school in Arkansas that was launching a school improvement effort and had exhibited strong leadership. Precisely because the effort was just getting underway, SEDL expected major issues and problems to arise as the VIE program was being implemented. This study of the school improvement process focuses on the strategies that Delta High's leaders employed to implement VIE, the problems they encountered, how they dealt with these issues and problems, and factors that generally facilitated or impeded school improvement. It examines the changes expected of teachers, students, and parents, and the pros and cons of partial change versus comprehensive school-wide change. The lessons learned at Delta

High may help any school seeking to upgrade its curriculum, whether the school is located in a rural or urban community.

Community and Historical Context

Delta High was part of a small district that had just two elementary schools, a junior high, and the high school. Nearly 60 percent of the district's student population participated in the free-lunch program, and 77 percent of the families had incomes below the poverty level (Boyd and McGree, 1995, p. 4). When Southwest Educational Development Laboratory (SEDL) chose Delta High for its study in 1992, Delta High was serving 471 students in grades 10–12, 41 percent of whom were participating in the free or reduced-price lunch program. Regarding ethnicity, 56 percent of the students were African-American; 41 percent were Anglo-American; and less than three percent were of other racial groups. Among the staff, 57 percent were Anglo-American and 43 percent were African-American.

Built in 1974, Delta High had a modern and spacious facility. The main building was equipped with 48 computers (located primarily in the office education department) and every room had a television. An adjacent building housed vocational classes. The small size of the school appeared to facilitate one-to-one interaction between staff members, although one staff member cited the existence of two buildings as a barrier to communication.

The superintendent had previously been the principal of one of the elementary schools in the district. At that time, he implemented a major change—the shift from homogeneous to heterogeneous grouping of students. Beginning with eight homogeneous tracks, he reduced the number of tracks first from eight to four, then from four to two, and finally from two to one. This type of gradual approach was also used in Delta High's implementation of Ventures in Education.

In response to low test scores, a more recent change in the district was the revamping of the entire mathematics curriculum, from the beginning of elementary school to the end of high school. To prepare students for advanced placement calculus in high school, the elementary curriculum was revised. Elementary teachers received staff development, Algebra I was initiated at the junior high level, and a trigonometry class was added to the high school curriculum. In addition, students were allowed to enroll in two mathematics courses in one year. The textbook *Transition Mathematics* was adopted to replace texts used in high school general mathematics and basic algebra courses. The district also purchased a computer for each mathematics classroom, classroom calculators for each student, and graphing calculators for use by trigonometry students. These changes were implemented during the 1991-92 school year. It was reported that students responded to these changes very favorably and that relating mathematics to "everyday things" and having students use computers and calculators helped to motivate them.

A key player in the effort to revamp the district's mathematics curriculum was a mathematics teacher at Delta High, who later became the school's Ventures in Education Coordinator. Generally speaking, she taught the above-average to high-achieving students. Her family was prominent and respected in the community.

The superintendent, who considers it an important part of his role as superintendent to provide and share information, first heard about Ventures in Education at a statewide meeting and shared this new information with the man who was then the new principal of Delta High. This principal, who was of African-American descent, had been involved with professional organizations and statewide instructional initiatives, including PET (Program for Effective Teaching). Perhaps because of these networking experiences, he was very receptive to the idea of Ventures in Education and created a committee of teachers, as was the school's practice, to study VIE. The principal and several teachers attended an awareness session and reported on VIE at a meeting of the faculty, which subsequently voted to adopt the program (Boyd and McGree, 1995, p. 5).

Challenges of the New Program

To oversee the implementation of Ventures in Education, a steering committee was established, consisting of administrators, some teachers, and a few carefully selected parents who were likely to support the initiative. Because of her commitment and past success in curriculum improvement, the mathematics teacher who had revised the district's mathematics curriculum was chosen by the steering committee to be the VIE Coordinator. As such, she was responsible for organizing the steering committee's meetings and guiding its decisions. Early on, a group of teachers and at least one parent visited a school in Alabama that had implemented Ventures in Education. This visit instilled in them the confidence that if the Alabama school could implement VIE with meager resources, then Delta High certainly could, too.

The parent included on the visit greatly helped to stir up interest in and support for VIE among other parents. According to the principal, parents had considerably more influence on the development of the Ventures in Education program than on previous change efforts. "Parents have been involved since the very beginning. They developed the criteria for the program on an even playing field with the teachers," he said. Parents, he continued, "have not hesitated to give input, whether it's positive or negative along the way. That's good because that has not really happened with programs we have launched before. The level of participation was...fantastic but at the same time uncomfortable for some of the teachers." It was his perception, however, that this degree of influence seemed to make teachers somewhat uncomfortable, at least initially.

Each Ventures school was given some latitude to make strategic decisions, the most important of which was whether to implement VIE school-wide or to select only one part of the school to implement the program. The national Ventures organization preferred a school-wide program, but it allowed schools to start with a cohort of students who progressed together from the 9th to the 12th grade. At Delta High, the VIE Steering Committee chose to require that students' test scores meet certain minimum criteria to be eligible for Ventures. For students meeting the criteria (50th percentile or above on tests), however, participation was voluntary. The parents on the VIE Steering Committee influenced the committee's decision to limit eligibility. These parents, it appeared, had children attending Delta High who could meet the minimum criteria for Ventures, and they seemed to accept it as natural that students varied in performance from high to low and that above-average students needed and deserved a special program that allowed them to reach their full potential.

The VIE Coordinator and Steering Committee were proactive in their efforts to disseminate information about the new Ventures in Education program. During the 1991–92 school year, communiqués to such organizations as the Chamber of Commerce and the Lions Club plus articles in the local newspaper were designed to prepare the community for implementation of the program in the 1992–93 school year. The VIE Coordinator also held meetings in the spring of 1992 at which parents, students, and others were briefed and given the opportunity to ask questions. African-American teachers, concerned that a special outreach effort was needed to reach African-American parents, worked through the churches in the community to encourage parents to attend similar meetings. According to some staff, African-Americans were somewhat underrepresented on the VIE Steering Committee.

Enrichment classes during the summer of 1992 officially launched the new program for the 1992–93 school year. These classes were required of the Ventures students, despite some concern that deserving students might not be able or willing to attend summer classes. Nevertheless, approximately 100 students in the 9th and 10th grades enrolled, which constituted 32 percent of the students in these two grades.

Some teachers were clearly dissatisfied with the choice of teachers for the summer classes. They felt that minority teachers were underrepresented, perhaps sending a hidden message to minority students that might cause or perpetuate low self-esteem. Exacerbating this concern was the perception that some of the teachers employed in the summer program were reportedly teaching courses outside of their subject areas, even though teachers for those subject areas were available during the summer.

Since the 9th graders attended the junior high, two campuses were involved, making implementation more complicated than it might have been if all VIE students had attended only the high school. As might be expected, problems arose fairly soon after implementation got underway. The first problem was a delay in getting laboratory equipment for a science class so that more hands-on instruction could be provided. Second, staff development that had been planned for August (before the new school year would begin) was postponed by the national VIE organization. Although these delays occurred for reasons beyond the school's control, teachers experienced frustration because they began the new program without adequate training and equipment.

Changes Demanded of Teachers, Students, and Parents

At first, some individuals—both faculty and students—saw little difference between the VIE classes and the regular curriculum. Gradually, however, the differences became apparent as teachers who attended training tried new instructional strategies in their classrooms and demanded more of students.

Teachers

Before implementation of the Ventures program, teachers had a fairly traditional view of teaching in which the teacher imparted knowledge to students in the "direct teach" mode. An attitudinal survey administered by VIE revealed that:

- 61 percent of the teachers agreed that their students were not motivated to learn
- 81 percent agreed that their students did not have the background for rigorous academic work in mathematics and science
- 58 percent believed that only above-average students could do well in mathematics and science

Teachers were provided training on new instructional strategies, such as cooperative learning and problem-based learning, in the hope that they would learn to challenge students more, require more academic rigor, and be more aware of students' talents and potential. While some teachers tried the strategies and embraced their new role as a "coach" that facilitates learning, others were much more reluctant, either because they lacked confidence that they could manage the classroom while using the new instructional strategies or because they simply did not buy into the new strategies.

One VIE teacher was not using the new instructional strategies because "she was really just scared to try." After the project leader encouraged her to try them out, the teacher used the strategies with good results. The teacher then used the strategies not only in her VIE classes but in her other classes as well. This fit with the goals of project leaders who envisioned the VIE program being spread throughout the school. Persistent encouragement to try either from the VIE coordinator or from other teacher-leaders, helped some, but not all, of these reluctant teachers to implement the new strategies in their classrooms.

Students

Although some saw little difference between the VIE and regular classes, everyone agreed that the VIE program required considerably more homework. Despite this, grades were going down because of the increased academic rigor of the coursework. Students who had always gotten As were suddenly making an occasional B or C, much to their chagrin, and grade consciousness surfaced as a result. Many faculty members perceived the students, and even their parents, to be more concerned about grades than about learning. "We need to switch them to...where they critically analyze things instead of memorizing," one teacher noted. "It seems like the students have not been asked to do a lot in the past and now they are being asked to do more. It is going to take some time for the students to adjust." A few VIE students requested to leave the program. While some did leave, the counselor persuaded others to stay.

An important lesson learned from this case study is that school change at Delta High required the students to change. Challenged to do homework and to meet higher academic standards, many of the VIE students experienced more frustration than in the past. They had to learn to work harder, and because of the new instructional strategies, they had to learn to work in teams and to rely less on memorization and more on thinking, applying, and solving problems. As students matured and accepted the challenges of hard work and higher-order thinking, school leaders wanted better measures than test scores to assess and document the improvements they saw in students.

Although the leaders had involved both parents and students in planning and troubleshooting, a few students still complained that decisions had been made without consulting them. Nevertheless, involving students seemed to pay off. Students accurately identified the leaders of the VIE implementation effort and many expressed appreciation for the leaders' hard work and dedication.

Parents

Parents, too, had to modify their conceptions of teaching, learning, and classroom life. According to the VIE coordinator, some of the parents appeared to steer their children in the wrong direction by conveying to them what high school and college had been like for them. In particular, parents who themselves received college or university degrees had an out-of-date image or schema of what college was like. Evidently they were telling their children that college would be easier than what they were experiencing in high school with the Ventures program. However, colleges have changed, too, and competition for admission to colleges and universities was now much stiffer than in times past.

When the students complained about having too much homework, their parents backed them up. They brought this to the attention of the school administrators and the VIE Coordinator, who then encouraged the teachers to schedule and coordinate their assignments so that the workload for students was more evenly distributed. Parents also formed support groups, helping, for example, to keep the library open during late afternoon and evening hours so that students could work there.

Vision: School-Wide or Not School-Wide

Although the program was not implemented school-wide, the national Ventures organization and the National Science Foundation (a major source of funding for the program) expected the school eventually to expand the program to the entire student body. This point was not clear to staff, however, and a variety of concerns about equity surfaced early on. "These kids were selected for Ventures based on their math scores," said one teacher, "but just because they were accelerated in math does not mean they are accelerated in other subjects." Other teachers expressed concern that the new program was so demanding that it diverted precious time and resources away from other priorities, including the education of the students who were not participating in the program. Differences of opinion concerning the school-wide issue prevented the staff from developing a truly shared vision for the Ventures program.

The superintendent, the principal, and the VIE Coordinator all appeared comfortable with the decision to implement Ventures on a small scale. One of them explained it this way:

> I entered into this process knowing full well that if you want to change something, you can't do the whole picture all at once. You have to have focus areas. The idea is to sell how you go about improving student achievement, a little piece at a time. In order to sell a program, if people can see success, it is much easier to sell. If you want to achieve success, it's much easier with people who are already committed. In essence, you take a volunteer group of students with good support from their parents at home, with good instruction from teachers, they come into the program, and you get that success. The idea is that we would take this whole concept and expand it school-wide. That's been the plan from square one. I have seen other teachers who are not directly involved, who have responded by incorporating some of the strategies that are

being used by Ventures teachers. This year our social studies teachers put together a Globalfest. It involved some Venture teachers, but it also involved some teachers who were not Ventures. What they did across disciplines, they brought together people from all over this state, in a multicultural kind of way. They brought in examples of different cultures. They had kids go and do projects that were exhibited in an assembly that was tremendously well received by the whole community.

Departure of the Principal

In May 1993, the principal accepted a position at the forefront of the state's school reform efforts. While a change in leadership puts any school in limbo, it is especially unfortunate when it occurs in the middle of a school improvement effort that is controversial among staff. After the principal's departure was announced, staff adopted a "wait and see" attitude, as one teacher put it.

The new principal, who came on board in time for the 1993–94 school year, viewed the Ventures in Education as just one of the programs the school could offer students: VIE for honors students planning to attend college; a core curriculum for other students on an academic track; and Tech Prep for students preparing for various vocational focus areas.

Instead of focusing on the Ventures program, the new principal was interested in exploring block scheduling. Changes made as a result of the Ventures program appeared to have paved the way, making staff receptive to as major a change as block scheduling. To prepare for it, Delta High staff visited several schools in different stages of implementation. At one end of the spectrum, staff visited a school which had been in the process of implementing block scheduling for just four months. Another school had implemented block scheduling four years ago. This series of school visits appeared to be an excellent strategy for implementation planning. It allowed school staff to witness the pitfalls of implementing the proposed change. At the same time, it gave them a picture of the eventual outcome and a hope that they could achieve it.

After exploring block scheduling during the 1994–95 school year, Delta High adopted a "4/4" block plan for the 1995–96 school year. Under this plan, class periods would be 90 minutes long, and students would take four subjects during each semester, fall and spring. Also during the 1995–96 school year, the school offered for the first time a full Tech Prep program, in which students could select from six clusters, depending on the career interests.

Leadership Strategies

Professional Development

Staff development sessions regarding cultural differences and sensitivity to the individual learning needs of students had been conducted when SEDL first visited Delta High in March 1992. An awareness of these instructional needs was widespread among the faculty members and administrators, and several staff members reported that training had emphasized such instructional strategies as cooperative learning.

After instilling in teachers an awareness of learning styles and different instructional strategies, the Ventures program offered more specific staff development sessions on problem-based learning, which incorporates cooperative learning, paired problem solving, Socratic questioning techniques, seminars, and independent research. Training sessions emphasized constructivist roles for teachers and students, in which instruction actively engages students in learning, and the teacher assists and coaches the students while learning along with them. Training on "Touchstones Readings," emphasized the use of selected readings according to a specified protocol; teachers were not to correct students, and no one could interrupt when a student was expressing his opinion about the selected reading. Designed to teach communication and coherent verbalization of thought, the Touchstones method stresses the capabilities of each individual and aims to instill in students a respect for the ideas, opinions, and beliefs of others.

The Problem-Based Learning Institute, a collaboration between the national Ventures organization, a university, and a school district, provided training-of-trainers to a few selected teachers from each of the seven Ventures schools in Arkansas, and these "Problem-based Learning Training Teams" delivered the training in their respective schools. In addition to workshops, the training featured demonstrations and team teaching sessions in classrooms that gave teachers the opportunity for guided practice. The Problem-based Learning Training Teams also had the opportunity to attend a week-long "Problem Design Seminar," in which they designed problems that students could work on during the 1995–96 school year, using curricular materials currently in use.

In one important respect, staff development was an uphill battle. The school had a legacy of providing training without articulating any expectation that the teachers attending the training should implement what they had learned in their classes. Fortunately, the new principal followed up on training sessions by visiting classroom visits and talking to teachers one-on-one. It became clear to staff that, unlike the past, they were expected to implement the new instructional strategies they were learning.

Input from Parents and Students

To deal with the problems that arose early during implementation, the VIE coordinator involved both parents and students in planning and problem-solving. In meetings, students identified problems and proposed solutions, which were then presented to school administrators and parents. Parents formed parent support groups for each of the two grade levels in the program, and these in turn formed several subcommittees to support implementation of the VIE program. One committee staffed the library one night per week for two hours to provide students additional access to the library. A rewards committee devised ways to recognize students' efforts, and a third committee telephoned parents when information had to be shared with them quickly. Parents were also invited to attend the staff development session on problem-solving. By involving as many parties as possible in planning and problem-solving early on, school leaders had support from parents and the community when problems arose during implementation. Flexibility in adapting to situations was also important in the school improvement process.

School-Wide Efforts

Delta High established several committees to address a wide spectrum of topics affecting school operations. One committee, for example, was assigned the topic of assessment and charged with developing better ways (besides tests) to assess students' thinking and problem-solving skills. These committees constituted the school's approach to site-based management.

A beautiful example at Delta High was the school's involvement in GlobalFest, at which different groups of students developed displays and activities to depict different countries around the world. This event appeared to generate school pride among Ventures and non-Ventures students and teachers, whether they supported the Ventures initiative or not.

Factors Affecting Improvement

Probably the most advantageous factor for the VIE program at Delta High was its participation in the state-level Ventures project, which brought support from the Arkansas Project Director, from the other six schools that were implementing VIE. and from the national organization, Ventures in Education, Inc. One important advantage was having an external facilitator who could broach difficult subjects and make statements that no one wanted to hear. Of course, even external facilitators must be sensitive to the political environment, but they can take risks with much less fear of reprisal than a teacher or even an administrator within the school.

Divisions in the school were the root of most problems, and tensions diverted time and energy away from implementing the Ventures program.

Administrative support waxed and waned during the study period. At the time the study, the principal began fully supported VIE, but his successor was more sympathetic to those faculty members who opposed the program. Some students, especially at-risk students, did not benefit from the program, but yet staff time and other resources that might have helped those students were diverted to the VIE program. When administrative support for VIE seemed at an all-time low, the Chamber of Commerce received a communiqué that was clearly intended to muster more community support for Ventures. In fact, the communiqué listed steps that community members could take to assist the program. Although support wavered at the school level, the superintendent had a stabilizing effect. To him, the Ventures program was the district's "showcase" project, and when tests scores were lower than expected one year, he looked to the program as a possible remedy. His support was key to the program's continued success in the face of opposition.

General Lessons Learned

The pros and cons of partial change versus comprehensive school-wide change constitute an important aspect of the Arkansas study. School leaders should weigh carefully the advantages and disadvantages early on, taking into account school goals, financial resources, political climate, and many other factors.

A partial change may serve to reward and energize those teachers whose skills or commitment stand out above the rest. School-wide change requires everyone to have the skills, commitment, and tolerance for frustration that the change demands. Since school-wide change requires that everyone must also have the necessary resources, such as new books or laboratory equipment, a school may choose partial change because it lacks the ability to provide needed resources to everyone. It may also choose partial change because it runs the risk that some staff (whose skills or commitment are lacking) will underutilize the resources. Referring to a member of the faculty, one interviewee explained, "When asked to change her behavior, she just refuses to, or if the person is persistent enough, she'll say she will but then won't to the tune of several hundred dollars worth of books bought specifically for her." This pitfall, while not totally eliminated, is easier to avoid if a change affects only part of a school.

Delta High's external facilitator reported that some Ventures schools have implemented the program in stages. Schoolwide implementation at Delta High, however, raises questions about the essential components of the program: increased course requirements, summer enrichment, field trips, and more individualized attention. Would the course requirements need to be different for vocational students? Is it reasonable to expect all students to attend summer courses? Are there enough resources to send all students on field trips? Will teachers offers students the kind of support that one teacher provides to 11 students by inviting them to her home once a week for a study group in the evening?

A partial change, it can be argued, is more likely to be successful than school-wide change because it is easier to manage. The success of the new program or practice will then sell it to others. "It's hard to argue with success," was the rationale of one administrator at Delta High, justifying the school's decision to begin the Ventures in Education program with only some of the students, in this case students whose grades and test scores met certain minimum criteria.

On the other hand, even a partial change demands so much attention and so many resources that those students and teachers who are not involved in the new effort tend to feel slighted. To them, the program has been given top priority at their expense, and their feelings of jealousy and rejection result in conflicts that tend to divert attention away from implementation of the change. In addition, those not involved in a change effort nevertheless need to know about the change. One veteran teacher at Delta High put it this way:

> I am a part of this faculty that people may ask me about the program, and I know a lot of people. I have been teaching 28 years and I have had a hundred and some odd students a year. I know a lot of people here, and I feel that I need to know a little something about the program.

If a change is contemplated for only part of a school, it necessarily draws organizational lines between that part and the rest of the school. And if those organizational lines coincide with social, ethnic, or political divisions that already exist, the change will exacerbate those divisions. Because schoolwide change avoids any impression of preferential treatment or discrimination toward particular teachers or students, schools already divided into factions should lean heavily toward choosing schoolwide change if at all possible.

Another important aspect of the Arkansas study is that school change may require students to change. Some relevant comments regarding this point are the following:

> We're trying to undo the concept that if you get help from somebody, that is copying. It is hard for the [students] to do, because they are so used to working on things by themselves.
>
> We've had to modify this business of pair[ed]-problem solving and problem-based learning, because our [students] are not ready for them. We're having to break them out of the mold they've been in for so long and put them into another mold, and they are having a hard time with that. We're also having to get them into the habit of homework again.

At some point during the implementation of VIE, school leaders realized the importance of changes in students to the success of the program. As students made progress, the teachers found the changes they saw in students to be very rewarding. One teacher, for example, mentioned the students' enthusiasm for activities that involved cooperative learning. Referring to these activities, the teacher explained that "students that have never been interested in anything before" are asking whether they were going to do the activity again. "One thing that I like about the Ventures program," another teacher remarked, "is [that] the students that started out in the program as a unit seem to have bonded together. They seem to pull together and work together. We have cooperative learning where the students can get together and solve problems together."

There were several indications that the Ventures program at Delta High improved students' academic performance. Although no one expected "quick returns," within two years after implementation began, test score averages increased for Ventures students and for non-Ventures students. At first, very few minority students were participating in Ventures, but that was changing gradually. In addition, more female students were taking the "tough" courses like physics that females were traditionally discouraged from taking. During the 1994–95 school year, Delta High students performed extremely well in three competitions. On the American Mathematics High School Examination, seven students made the "Arkansas Honor Roll", and the school's team of students placed 23rd in the state. The school won second place in geometry and an honorable mention in advanced mathematics in the Mathematics Regional Contest sponsored by the National Council for the Teaching of Mathematics. And two students won first and third place in a Leadership Essay Contest, while another three students placed in the top 20.

And just as the VIE Steering Committee had worked to communicate its intentions to implement the Ventures program, it worked to communicate the success of the program. Through articles in the local newspaper and other means, teachers and students were recognized for their hard work and improved performance.

Ventures in Education Across the Nation

Ventures in Education (VIE) is a reform effort based in New York City which has been implemented in 81 schools across the nation. The goals of VIE are to:

- establish expectations that all children can learn in an academically challenging course of study
- improve the academic achievement of minority and economically disadvantaged students, particularly in science and mathematics

- revitalize teachers and enhance their professional satisfaction

Key components of the Ventures program are rigorous academic requirements, problem-based learning, and support systems for students. Formally established in 1990, VIE is based on the success of several demonstration projects funded in the 1980s by the Josiah Macy, Jr. Foundation. VIE aims to improve the academic performance of minority and economically disadvantaged high school students with the long term goal of encouraging these students to pursue careers in the health care professions. The development of an academically rigorous high school program grew out of the Macy Foundation's earlier efforts to provide academic support for students in higher education who were poorly prepared. While support for students after they had already entered college had value, the foundation realized that students would benefit more from support that was provided to them while they were still in high school.

As of 1994, more than 30,000 students had participated in the Ventures program, 70 percent of whom were economically disadvantaged African-Americans, Hispanics, or American Indians. Of the 3,000 Ventures students who have graduated, 86 percent enrolled in four-year colleges, compared to a national average of 61 percent.

The Ventures program entails the following implementation and instructional strategies:

- Develop consensus among school administrators, teachers, and parents that increased academic rigor and high expectations for all students are both desirable and feasible
- Re-establish district- and school-based leadership in curriculum and instruction, and create leadership teams in each school, comprised of the principal, assistant principals, department chairs, and the Ventures Coordinator.
- Revise the school schedule to allow for double periods in selected disciplines, as well as time for teachers to plan together and participate in staff development
- Establish coordinated partnerships between each school and the staff developers in the superintendent's office
- Provide staff development by department and interdisciplinary teams through Ventures' Problem-Based Learning Institute
- Monitor the development of each program through the collection of student performance data and questionnaires designed to measure the attitudinal changes of students, teachers, and parents
- Evaluate the growth and development of students in each school

Below is a list that shows the variety of schools which have implemented Ventures in Education.

Alabama (rural western region)
- 3 middle schools
- 20 high schools

Arkansas (Mississippi Delta region)
- 3 junior high schools
- 4 high schools

Connecticut (New Haven)
- 1 high school

Illinois (Springfield)
- 1 high school

Navajo Nation (Arizona, New Mexico, and Utah)
- 6 high schools

New York (Brooklyn, Bronx, and Manhattan)
- 4 elementary schools
- 3 junior high schools
- 12 high schools

Washington D.C.
- 24 high schools

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Addendum

During the study period, Delta High and the other Ventures schools in Arkansas joined an initiative called the Arkansas AdVentures Computer Network. With a grant secured by SEDL, the project is designed to link the schools together, upgrade the computer technology skills of students and staff, and encourage learning through information-sharing and the use of the Internet. Training on electronic communications and the Internet, and monitoring of activity on the AdVentures Network are key components of the project. In partnership with SEDL and the Arkansas Public School Computer Network, the AdVentures Network seeks to become a "learning community" (for information on learning communities, see the Louisiana site paper included in this report). Funding for this initiative was received in 1994 and will continue through 1996.

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Texas: Improving School Culture at Border High

Border High, a large south Texas high school serving 2,500 to 2,800 students in grades 9–12, was located near the border of the United States and Mexico. During the school year, the number of students varied roughly according to a bell curve, gradually increasing after the start of the school year as migrant students arrived, peaking at the turn of the year, and gradually decreasing thereafter as migrant students departed.

Border High was located in Texas' Educational Service Center Region One, which spans a long, narrow area in the Lower Rio Grande Valley, regionally referred to as "the Valley," where some of the poorest counties in the state and nation are located. When Border High was selected as the Texas site, approximately 80 percent of its students participated in the free or reduced-price lunch program. At that time, Region One ranked (in comparison to the other 19 educational service center regions in Texas) either highest or lowest in the state on a variety of measures outlined in Table 3.

Table 3

Profile of Region One Educational Service Center

Measure	Data	Ranking
Percent of Change in Student Enrollment over a Five-year Period	18.1%	Highest
Dropout Rate	8.7%	Highest
Percent of Students Passing All State-mandated Tests Taken (Texas Assessment of Academic Skills)	43.2%	Lowest
Mean SAT Score	804	Lowest
Student/Teacher Ratio	17.5	Highest
Student/Staff Ratio (Teaching & auxiliary staff combined)	7.7	Lowest

Measure	Data	Ranking
Hispanic Students	94%	Highest
Low Income	72%	Highest
Bilingual Education	35%	Highest
Special Education	7%	Lowest
Hispanic Teachers	70%	Highest
Minority Staff	83%	Highest

Texas Education Agency, 1992

The school district served primarily three communities that were adjacent to a larger South Texas city. According to 1990 census data, the combined population of these communities was approximately 52,000. The communities were predominantly Hispanic with few other minorities. At Border High, 98 percent of the students were Hispanic; 78 percent were from low-income families; and 42 percent received bilingual or ESL (English as a Second Language) education services.

History of Change at Border High

Border High was selected as the Texas site at the end of the 1991–1992 school year when it was just initiating a major school improvement effort. The school had been one of 83 schools selected in January 1992 to participate in the Texas Education Agency's Partnership Schools Initiative (PSI). The school hoped to:

- improve attitudes and heighten expectations for students—including the expectations that students had of themselves—thereby increasing their chances of success in school.
- improve teachers' attitudes toward students—including their expectations of students and working to increase student's chances of success in school.
- improve parents' attitudes about becoming involved in the education of their children—including the expectations that they had for them regarding academic performance—thereby increasing their chances of success in school.

The yearly dropout rate for Border High at that time was 13.7 percent, and the failure rate on at least one test of the TAAS, a state-mandated academic test battery, was 69.4 percent in the 9th grade and 51.7 percent in the 11th grade. Only about half of the graduates traditionally pursued any further education beyond high school (Texas Education Agency, 1992). Clearly, a substantial percentage of students district-wide were at risk of academic failure. This was also true at the Border High campus.

Border High, built in the 1960s, was housed in eighteen buildings which included an auditorium/band hall, a physical education complex, an administrative/counseling complex, and 32 portable classroom buildings, all located on a 40-acre campus. Walkways between the buildings had carport-like roofs for protection against bad weather.

Grade-level Transitions

Prior to the 1990-1991 school year, Border High had served for many years as the only high school for the district. As the student population grew, however, the ninth graders were moved to other buildings, leaving Border High to serve sophomores, juniors, and seniors. In the late 1980s, because of continued population growth, a second high school complex was built in another one of the school district's communities.

When the new high school opened for the 1990—1991 school year, all freshmen and sophomores in the district attended Border High while the juniors and seniors attended the new high school. It was reported that "football and politics were the reason the school remained 'one' high school" on two campuses rather than two separate high schools. A chronology of all the grade-level changes appears in Table 4.

Table 4

Grade Level Changes, 1963–1992

Years	Grades Served
1963 - 1981	9 – 12
1981 - 1990	10 – 12
1990 - 1992	9 – 10

These changes in grade-level composition caused significant staff turnover, which had a destabilizing effect on relationships among the staff of 160 professionals and 60 other staff members. Concurrent with the opening of the new school, the Ninth Grade Center was closed and its staff was moved to Border High, merging with the remaining faculty. Border High became the "lower high school" for grades nine and ten, while a large percentage of the faculty and administrators were transferred to the "upper high school," which consisted of grades eleven and twelve. During these transitions, some teachers stayed, while others left and new people took their places.

Students, too, had been shuttled from one school to another several times during the period. The 9th and 10th graders did not adjust well to the changes. They had difficulty staying on task, and did not have older students in the school to serve as positive role models; this was a difficult time for them. There was also little sense of belonging among the students.

In addition to organizational changes, the sheer size of the school—spread out over 40 acres—made communication and coordination difficult. Because of the school's size, its physical configuration, and students' stages of development, discipline had become a frequent concern in the school. Instead of attending classes, many students were "hanging out" in obscure areas between buildings or off campus. The student dropout rate was high and performance on state-mandated tests was low. The major grade-level changes from 1981 to 1990 had had a negative effect on students.

In addition to the usual teenage discipline issues, there were gang activities on and around the campus. Intimidation of students in school, fights between students, and gang rumbles during passing periods caused the school to have a negative reputation in the community. As gang activity became a serious problem, it had an effect on student achievement. Border High staff were concerned that students could not learn if they were afraid; if they were not in school; if they had their attention on their gang activities and not on their school work; or if they did not have positive role models. Staff made the following comments:

> Sometimes a kid gets word that a gang will jump them, so they leave school early.
>
> Gangs are strong because they hang together.

> Students at times are the leaders of the school. They influence other students, sometimes more than we do.
>
> It was damaging that 9th and 10th graders didn't have role models and no continuity. At the 9th Grade Center, the students had no one to look up to; in a 9–10 school, there are no 11–12 [grade] role models—no cohorts that went through all four grades together. This seems to be a factor in fights and gangs.
>
> I was dealing with students that nearly got into a fight. A boy had a knife. I took him on a home visit. Each day the minute I walk into the school, I walk out. I work with assistant principals and the attendance officer to deal with problem kids.
>
> Some students want our school to be harder on gangs; want us to get rid of them. But we have to stick to the law and provide them an education.

A New Principal Comes to Border High

Positive changes occurred when a new principal, a long-time resident of the area and employee of the school district, was assigned to Border High in 1989. The new principal came with a strong background as an instructional leader, having been an elementary school principal and director of various district programs. More recently he had been the principal of the Ninth Grade Center, prior to its closing. The changes which he sought to bring about concentrated on developing positive attitudes about school, home, and interpersonal relationships. He believed this was the key to preventing gang activity at Border High and increasing academic achievement for all students.

Several school improvement efforts were initiated to alleviate the turmoil at Border High. Programmatic changes that were initiated in September 1990 included the following:

- a content mastery program, in cooperation with the special education resource programs;
- a drug awareness program;
- a "school within a school" that aimed to keep chronically truant students in school and provide highly structured support for their academic success;
- a Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) program, targeting potential dropouts for computer-assisted academic remediation and job training.

The new principal, concerned about the gang activity, low student achievement, negative school climate, and the school's reputation in the community, focused his attention on at-risk students. During the 1991–92 school year, two staff persons were assigned to work exclusively as "student liaisons," helping at-risk students to deal with problems at school, at home, or in the community. The principal modeled a new caring and student-centered environment by taking students home, talking with them and their parents about problems and concerns, and providing rewards to students for appropriate behaviors.

A teacher who conceived of a "school-within-a-school" wrote a proposal for the concept, and the principal gave his approval to implement it during the 1991–

1992 school year. The school-within-a-school program was initially designed for students who were constantly tardy or absent, but it later included low-performing students as well, especially freshman who had been held back and were having difficulty passing to the next grade. The principal's goal for the students was, "for them to see the light at the end of the tunnel."

The students were placed in a building by themselves with an assistant principal in charge, and the teachers "floated" from classroom to classroom instead of the students. The teachers used the learning styles concept and exercised more flexibility with the students than they would have in a traditional classroom. Although the program was successful, it was discontinued after the 1991–1992 school year, because the central office administration felt that it was too expensive to continue.

A strategy used to minimize aggressive behaviors on the school grounds was to make staff visible during passing periods and other free time. A "code blue" message over the school's intercom meant that faculty were to move outside their classrooms to supervise the halls or school grounds because of an actual or potential problem somewhere on the campus.

Prominent School Leaders

In May 1992, SEDL staff visited Border High to collect the first set of data for the case study. Information collected during the first site visit suggested that although many people held positions of leadership, two people consistently emerged as recognized, functional leaders. One person, who was regularly identified as a leader and advocate for students, was one of the student liaisons. This student liaison worked with students who were involved in the drug and gang culture or were socially at risk in other ways. Most of the staff members interviewed identified him as a leader and a positive influence for students.

The other, more prominent leader, was the principal. A number of his personal characteristics emerged from interviews, observations, and other interactions. He was seen as a hard worker, strongly student-centered, focused on instruction, and always concerned about "what is good for the students."

Data collected suggested that the principal was a very positive, supportive, and personable individual, who used humor well to make important points, to encourage others, and to diffuse tense situations. Many of his faculty and staff were solidly supportive of him. He was reportedly sensitive to the needs (both personal and academic) of students, staff, and the community, and he approached these needs as a problem solver.

Partnership Schools Initiative

In January 1992, Border High launched its improvement effort as a partnership school with the Texas Education Agency's Partnership Schools Initiative. This partnership was designed to improve student learning and close gaps in performance between various subgroups of students. Participating campuses were given flexibility in their application of state statutes and regulations and received more than the usual staff development resources from the Regional Education Service Center or TEA.

In essence, PSI sought to hold schools accountable for achieving state-determined student outcomes but allowed a great deal of flexibility in experimenting with alternative means for achieving those outcomes. With support from the Texas Education Agency, each regional service center assigned a PSI Coordinator to work with the small number of schools in the region participating in the PSI.

The PSI Coordinator provided logistical support in concert with financial support from the TEA to Border High. Acting as an external facilitator, the PSI coordinator arranged for the principal to attend leadership training along with other partnership schools in the area. The PSI gave Border High individual attention as a result of the partnership and helped plan and conduct a series of monthly staff development sessions.

The effectiveness of the staff development program appeared to hinge on the role of the PSI coordinator, who had a strong background in staff development. She honed the leaders' skills at planning and delivering training. As a result, the leaders learned to appreciate the importance of preparing and planning for everything from the goals and agenda to the name tags and grouping arrangements.

The PSI Coordinator also facilitated inservice sessions during which staff members worked in large and small groups to review and revise the campus improvement plan. With all staff working together, they had the opportunity to participate in updating the plan. Revision of the campus plan was scheduled for April of each school year.

The PSI coordinator regularly submitted a report to the TEA on the progress of Border High. According to instructions from the agency, she described the progress of each school as (1) moving toward its PSI goals on schedule, (2) progressing slowly, or (3) making minimal progress. If a report of minimal progress reached TEA, PSI staff at the state level were ready to help and to provide technical assistance.

Under PSI, participating schools were required to submit school improvement plans. Border High's plan called for changing the attitudes of staff, students, and parents, heightening their expectations of, and commitment to, each other, and to the success of all students. This effort involved activities aimed at parents, staff, and students simultaneously with one overall goal for Border High: to re-culture the school.

Primary Goal for Border High: To Re-culture the School

Border High's school improvement initiative focused on changing simultaneously the attitudes of three groups: teachers, students, and parents. In interviews, teachers frequently mentioned that they knew only a small percentage of the other teachers well enough to speak to them; and there were many others that they did not know at all. To improve the attitudes of students, staff, and parents concurrently, school leaders adopted a three-pronged "development" approach:

(1) change staff's mental models through monthly staff development sessions;
(2) heighten students' attitudes and expectations through retreats and Saturday workshops; and
(3) improve parents' understanding of their role in their children's learning through parenting classes and workshops for parents.

Teachers' attitudes that were targeted for change included the following:

- heightening teachers' sense of accountability or personal responsibility for the success of students, not only their own students but all students
- eliminating the tendency to blame students and their parents (or the home environment) for poor academic performance
- changing teachers' identity from teachers of subject areas to teachers of students
- raising teachers' expectations of themselves and students
- improving teachers' attitudes about teaching at Border High, their pride in the school, and their self-esteem
- encouraging teachers' motivation to perform to the best of their ability
- promoting an openness to working with other departments, not just within one's own department
- instilling in teachers an awareness of how important it was to involve parents more in the education of their children and to contact parents more frequently regarding students' performance, both positive and negative

Students' attitudes that were targeted for change included the following:

- fostering in students positive attitudes about Border High, their pride in the school, and their self-esteem
- improving students' attitude about performing to the best of their ability
- instilling in students a greater sense of control over their own destiny and a sense of responsibility for their own education and success

Parents' attitudes that were targeted for change included the following:

- fostering in parents positive attitudes about Border High, their pride in the school, and their self-esteem
- instilling in parents an awareness of how important it was to become involved in the education of their children
- encouraging parents to feel more welcome at the school, welcome to communicate with teachers and administrators and to participate as volunteers
- raising parents' expectations of themselves and their children
- encouraging parents to assume some responsibility for assisting teachers to maintain order by walking in the hallways before, during, and after class periods

Efforts to improve the attitudes of teachers focused on monthly staff development sessions. Staff development was seen as a vehicle for change, for improving the relationships that teachers and administrators had with students and parents. A PSI waiver allowed Border High to increase the number of inservice days from six (the normal number allowed) to ten (one a month). The first session on September 28, 1992, dealt with Life Management Skills (LMS). The following quotes by staff members (which were echoed by others who were interviewed) indicate how successful the LMS session was:

> [The LMS] session was very good. It was for all staff, not just for teachers. We broke up into six groups and had bonding activities, [for example] what makes me feel bad as a teacher. We touched on our personal lives, too, emphasizing the humanistic side of ourselves. We

> did a trust walk in which one person of a pair is blindfolded while the other leads that person. We concentrated on getting to know each other.
>
> The LMS inservice on September 28 was the most valuable inservice organized by and at this school. We saw a video about a student who was not achieving and his teacher thought he would never be a good student, but neither did the teacher know the student's background or home life. This video changed my attitude right away toward students that I had been thinking would never be good students, like the teacher in the video. I had never felt myself change so quickly. We learned that you can get good results by telling students they can do it. Some of the fun activities at the LMS inservice are good for breaking tension with students.

Inservices devoted to Life Management Skills gave faculty members the opportunity to get to know one another better, to look back on where they had been, and to look ahead to where they wanted to be in the future. Teachers were getting to know one another better as they worked in groups and participated in the activities. As a result of the LMS sessions, staff reported, they began to work better together. Teachers also said that they were enthusiastic about other efforts (that were already made or in the planning stages) to increase opportunities for staff to build relationships with each other.

Development of Students

On a campus with nearly 3,000 students and more than 200 staff members, it was easy for students to disappear in the masses. Students had been shuttled from one school to another several times during the period from 1981 to 1993. Such movement had a destabilizing effect on students and their relationships with one another. There was little sense of belonging. Gang activity, fights among students, and intimidation of students in school were all causing the school to have a negative reputation in the community.

Changes began to occur during the 1990–1991 school year when the new principal came to Border High. According to the principal, all of the school's improvement efforts were aimed at helping students, especially those at-risk of school failure. The "code blue" alert was designed to foster a safer and more orderly environment. To deal with gang-related and other problems, the principal designated two staff liaisons—a man and a woman— to assist male and female students, respectively. Through individual counseling and support groups, these liaisons worked with both gang members and students who feared the gangs, serving as their advocates in matters involving their teachers or parents.

In addition to the student liaisons, a community service aide worked with both parents and students to foster greater parental involvement and to deal with serious personal problems that arose on a daily basis for certain students or their families. A local police officer, who specialized in gang activities, often gathered two of the rival gangs to discuss their concerns and differences. He helped them to arrive at possible solutions and even arranged athletic events for different gangs in the community.

School leaders organized a Life Management Skills retreat for at-risk students, plus four Saturday workshops during the same period that it held monthly in-service days for staff. Like the LMS sessions for staff, these activities gave students the opportunity to focus on how they felt about school, how they related to their peers, and how they communicated their feelings to faculty, friends, and parents.

Parent Involvement: A High Priority

School improvement efforts at Border High included involving parents in their children's education to increase academic achievement. Most school-to-parent communication had been through traditional means: Parent/Teacher Organization (PTO) monthly meetings; PTO newsletters; various communiqués sent home with students; newspaper announcements; telephone calls or conferences with individual teachers, counselors, or administrators; and failure notices. The principal encouraged teachers to increase personal contacts with parents, especially parents of at-risk students. Establishing communication with and involving parents in school efforts was a high priority for this school.

Parents were strongly encouraged to communicate with the school about their concerns. At the beginning of the 1992–93 school year, the principal made arrangements for a classroom to be used as a parent room. The establishment and use of the parent room helped parents feel more welcome. Evening classes were conducted for parents and other community people at the school. In addition, the principal had plans to use school buses to transport parents to and from the school for various functions (e.g., parent night, PTO meetings). Each of these actions was designed to increase parental involvement and communication with the school.

Since Border High needed to provide a safe environment for students, the first parent meeting, held early in the 1992–93 school year, addressed gang activity at school. This meeting led to monthly parent meetings and parent training sessions, all held at school in the parent room. As parents became better acquainted with the school, they began to participate by supervising the halls and making suggestions to students regarding inappropriate behavior, such as "Let's go on to class now." In some cases parents escorted disruptive students to the office. Assistance by parents helped to decrease the number of fights during passing periods and helped students to realize the negative consequences of gang-related activities in school.

The 1992–1993 School Year: The Return to a Four-Year High School

In addition to the PSI efforts planned during the 1992–93 school year, the district reorganized so that there would be two distinct high schools. Border High opened the 1992–93 school year as a complete, four-year high school, serving not only freshmen and sophomores but also juniors and seniors. It was anticipated that the "trials and tribulations" of 1990 (when the ninth grade center had merged with those remaining at the "old high school," as Border High was called) would reappear as staff reassignments were made to accommodate the new 11th and 12th graders.

Furthermore, there were numerous student-related, administrative, curricular, extra-curricular, and other programmatic adjustments that had to be made, all of which diverted attention from the Partnership School Initiative.

Because of the new setting, new faculty/staff relationships, new policies, and new students, many modifications and compromises were negotiated. Such adjustments were difficult. Coping with these changes, the staff found little time to focus on the goals laid out in its PSI school improvement plan.

With professional and support staff spread out over the 40-acre campus, communication tended to break down. In general the predominant flow of information at this school was reported to be "top-down." Most "bottom-up" communication filtered through various intermediaries before reaching "administrative ears." Formal communication appeared to be primarily through traditional means, including memos, announcements over the intercom, faculty meetings, and workshops. However, according to many faculty interviewed, "information does flow both ways—department heads are the go-betweens between administration and teachers. The department heads meet with the principal on Mondays and with us on Wednesdays."

Administrator interviews reflected the impression that the communication structure generally worked well. However, faculty interviews suggested some concern with the structure. Teachers expressed some frustration with the length of time it took for certain critical information (for example, about such matters as early release days and other routine class changes) to reach them. Apparently, faculty sometimes heard such information from students before they received it through official channels. With so much information flowing through intermediaries, some information got censored, modified, forgotten or otherwise "filtered" before being passed on "up the line." Furthermore, "down the line" there was some variability in staff's perceptions of school goals, objectives, values, directions, and planned actions.

In general, the size of the faculty and the sprawling nature of the campus worked against good communication among faculty members. One example of this problem was shared by a teacher. At the end of the last day of school, a gang of youth seriously beat a male student. The teacher who described this incident was in the office at the time of the beating; by the time he walked back to his classroom, fellow teachers were asking if he had heard about the "kid who got shot."

The principal planned to work with and through assistant principals to improve the flow and accuracy of information. He planned to accomplish this by increasing the assistant principals' responsibilities as instructional leaders, having them visit classrooms and attend departmental meetings more frequently. In this way, they could serve as additional liaisons between administration and faculty. The principal acknowledged that this effort would take time and additional training and support to implement because this had not previously been a traditional responsibility of the assistant principals.

The principal generally maintained an "open door policy." However, because of the size of the faculty and the continuous, ever-pressing responsibilities of his position, he was not often able to meet individually with teachers. Other than classroom walk-throughs, official conferences, or quick, informal "hallway" meetings, the principal primarily received input from teachers through the department heads and the site-based management council, better known as the Campus Council.

The 1993–1994 School Year: LMS Continues

Goals for the 1993–94 school year remained the same as for the previous year, since Border High was still adjusting to being a full four-year high school again. The focus still centered on changing attitudes. An administrator reported that teachers and staff felt more confident because of the LMS session the previous year, and they wanted more LMS sessions for the 1993–94 school year. "We need to feel good about ourselves," he said. "We need at least one LMS session for the year." As a result, Border High had another full-staff LMS session during the fall of the 1993–94 school year. Staff asked for one or two LMS-related activities at each staff development session. A staff member who was interviewed reported that attitudes had improved since the time before LMS sessions had begun:

> When we started LMS, [that] was the beginning of our bonding as a staff. We had three different populations: [1] the new principal had brought some of the teachers from the 9th grade center, [2] teachers new to the district, and [3] the left overs at [Border High] who felt they were no good because they were not chosen to go to the new school....Teachers were not concerned about students after they left the classroom. Administration felt they did not get help from the teachers.

According to administrators interviewed, changing staff members' attitudes was not as simple as it sounded. Administrators had to work with staff on an ongoing basis, continually reminding them that "they are here for the students." As administrators met with teachers individually or in groups at meetings or staff development sessions, they reminded teachers and staff constantly that "students are our top priority and that we are here for the students." If teachers and staff did not remain focused, it would be very easy to go back to old attitudes.

Students also needed constant attention and needed to be reminded that they were in school to get an education, not for other reasons. The 1993–1994 school year marked the second year that juniors and seniors were a part of the school. A staff member expressed the importance of having juniors and seniors on campus:

> It is easier to deal with freshman and sophomores when they have the older students at school. Freshman and sophomores, by themselves, did not see leaders emerge and they fell through the cracks. Seniors can already see the end of the rainbow in May and that rubs off on all other students.

In addition to the LMS sessions, teachers had been asking for staff development which concentrated on instructional strategies to improve instruction. The Campus Council selected cooperate learning as an instructional strategy to investigate. Because of funds, the only way to provide cooperative learning to all teachers was to train certain teachers to train other teachers—in other words, training-of-trainers. The principal had experienced the training-of-trainers model when he and an assistant principal attended a meeting at SEDL the previous year to learn about mapping the history of change at a school. After that meeting, the two of them had trained other staff at Border High on the mapping process.

The PSI facilitator developed training-of-trainers sessions on cooperative learning and brought in a consultant for the sessions. Fifteen staff members received the training, including two assistant principals. Subsequently, the principal arranged release time for those who were trained (henceforth called the Border High trainers) to spend time at Region One planning how they would train other staff members. They paired off and a Region One staff person worked with each pair. There were six trainer teams, and each group included a social studies teacher, a language arts teacher, a mathematics teacher, and a science teacher. The Border High trainers were very effective, as indicated by high scores on evaluations of the training.

Staff development on learning styles was one of the requested sessions for the 1993–94 school year. A representative from Border High and from a feeder middle school who had participated in a week-long training session on learning styles at Region One presented staff development training on learning styles. While staff development during the 1993–94 school year concentrated on cooperative learning and learning styles, thought was given to extending instructional time through the eight-period day and to block scheduling.

The 1994–1995 School Year: Block Scheduling and a New Discipline Management Plan

As the 1994–1995 school year began, staff felt that they were still bonding as a result of LMS sessions during previous years. The school improvement initiative continued to focus on changing attitudes. It was evident that attitudes continued to improve as administrators and staff had opportunities to meet and interact with one another. In February 1995, administrators and teachers were asked what effect the Life Management Skills sessions had had on staff interactions and working relationships. Administrators and teachers agreed that staff members were more comfortable with each other and felt that they were working better as a group. There was a sense of "bonding"—that "LMS had made a difference."

The feeling among some of the staff was that staff development during the 1994–95 school year needed to focus on instructional strategies in addition to LMS-related activities at each session. Staff development during the 1994–95 school year shifted from staff needs to student needs, focusing on the following three areas:

- *Planning for block scheduling.*
  Border High worked with the other high school in the district in the planning for block scheduling. Central office administrators directed the two high schools to work together and to implement block scheduling in the same way, regardless of the uniqueness of each school. The two schools were also directed to develop a joint proposal that would be presented to the school board for approval in December 1994.

- *Developing a discipline management plan.*
  Border High was one of Region One's pilot sites for the implementation of a discipline management plan. It had been easy for students to skip classes; consequently the discipline management plan needed to specify steps to be taken to improve attendance.

- *Changing student attitudes.*
  Border High staff concentrated on helping students develop positive attitudes

and pride in themselves; and helping them feel good about being part of the school.

Since administrators and teachers were working better as a team, this seemed an appropriate time to present the new discipline management plan, developed by teachers and staff. This plan was developed after the Discipline Committee had attended a session at Region One on discipline management. The Border High plan was patterned after a plan that had been successful in a nearby school district.

The Discipline Committee introduced the new discipline management plan to teachers during the fall of the 1994–95 school year, during their conference period. The plan called for teachers to implement the assertive discipline system that had been used at an elementary school. In addition, on the first day of school, each teacher received 150 index cards. Teachers were to get specified information about each student and put all the information on an index card. Each teacher was to jot down positive and negative information for each student and communicate this information to parents. Some teachers objected to a part of the plan that they felt was too elementary for high school students; however, other staff members were in favor of the new discipline management plan and wanted to give it a chance. A full-day staff development session on discipline management followed the first session. A team of teachers presented the discipline management process to the entire staff.

In December, a committee of teachers, a counselor, and an attendance officer met to follow up on discipline management procedures. At this time the committee came up with a new tardy policy and a dress code. Enforcement of these two policies was controversial during the second semester, but administrators interviewed reported that the new policies were working "because it came from the teachers."

One administrator interviewed stated that "Bonding was there [with staff], so the rebellion was not successful. It was not successful because teachers stopped it versus being stopped by the administration. Changes were working because teachers were putting pressure on teachers."

The Discipline Committee developed a new discipline management plan as well as the new tardy and dress code rules in order to:

(1) foster a more positive school climate;
(2) create consistency in policy and procedures that would be followed and enforced by all staff members; and
(3) continue to decrease inappropriate behavior in school.

An administrator stated that he believed that these new school improvement efforts were successful because administrators, teachers, and students were directly involved in the development of the policies and procedures, and because "teachers were putting pressure on teachers to make these efforts successful."

Leadership Strategies

Effective strategies [illegible] school leaders led to changes over time. These strategies, as well as some strategies which administrators found to be not so effective, are discussed below.

Effective Leadership Strategies

The leaders at Border High took effective actions to articulate a vision, provide training, and promote communication. School leaders also attempted to provide opportunities for shared decision-making.

Articulating a vision. According to interviews conducted with faculty during the period from 1992 to 1995, a vision was articulated more and more clearly. Most faculty members spoke of changing attitudes. At the beginning, a few did not know what the school's goals entailed; however, as the years progressed, articulation of a shared vision was much more evident. The majority of staff had developed a much better understanding of the goals of the Partnership Schools Initiative. While some individuals continued to speak of the goals in general terms, no one professed not to know what the goals were. Answers were generally consistent with how leaders had articulated their goals, and many staff members distinctly delineated the three-pronged approach: (1) change student attitudes and expectations of themselves, (2) change staff attitudes and expectations of students through growth and development, and (3) improve parents' involvement in their children's learning.

Provision of training. Training and development were the cornerstone of the leaders' initiative to change attitudes. The most significant steps toward accomplishing the PSI goals involved a series of monthly staff development sessions. Border High received a waiver to increase the time devoted to staff development to one day per month. Since many staff members did not know each other, the topic of the first in-service in September 1992 was Life Management Skills (LMS). Through activities and working in groups, staff focused on themselves as persons, family members, and teachers. They got to know one another on a personal level. One of the activities provided opportunities for teachers to discuss the positive and the negative aspects of teaching.

Several members of the faculty commented on the value of this session. One teacher, who had worked at the campus for many years, referred to it as the most valuable training she had ever received at the school. She described the impact on her of the poignant video *Classroom of the Heart*, in which a teacher tries to understand students in light of their backgrounds and particular circumstances. Overnight, she began to question her own attitude toward some of her students, thinking freshly that perhaps they could do better in school. The first LMS session was so well received that another LMS inservice was conducted later in the year.

At another in-service, data were presented on each teacher's rate of failing students to underscore teachers' responsibility for the success of their students. Several staff reported contacting parents more frequently concerning the students in their classes. Teachers also valued the opportunity to meet by departments during an inservice.

A full day of in-service late in 1992 was devoted to review and revision of the campus improvement plan. The PSI Coordinator facilitated the session during which professionals and paraprofessionals worked alternately in small and large groups to review and revise the campus plan. The PSI Coordinator divided staff into two large groups. The two large groups were then split into subgroups of about ten people. Each subgroup discussed one of the eleven objectives in the original school improvement plan. By working in small groups to review and revise different portions of the plan, the faculty as a whole had a chance to participate in updating the plan. Although the logistics were difficult, the school demonstrated that it was possible to involve even a very large faculty in the development and revision of a school improvement plan.

Promoting communication. With seven assistant principals and more than 200 professional and paraprofessional staff, communication was quite a challenge at Border High. During the years of study at the Texas site, the administrators made significant changes to address common complaints, and the majority of faculty interviewed reported that communication had improved during this period. Lines of communication between administrators and department heads, between department heads and the campus council, and between the faculty and parents were all considered.

One strategy for promoting communication between administrators and faculty involved dissemination and collection of information through department heads. Administrators shared information with department heads, who in turn disseminated the information to teachers at department meetings. This line of communication was also used to poll staff on various issues. During department meetings, which were held once a week, faculty had a chance to discuss concerns, and department heads then relayed their input back up to the administrators. However, concerns were expressed that decisions made by the campus council were not always shared with the department heads. Campus council members were elected by their departments, and the department head was often, but not always, the elected representative.

To eliminate these problems, the sequence of weekly meetings was carefully planned: the administrative meetings for the principal and assistant principals were scheduled first, the department heads met second, and finally, the department heads had their department meetings with their staffs. The campus council met monthly, and during the week that it was scheduled, it occurred before the department meetings. Anyone who wanted to voice concerns which they felt had not been addressed could attend the campus council meetings, and several faculty members interviewed emphasized that teachers were aware that campus council meetings were open. Those who wanted to know what decisions the campus council had made were urged to attend the campus council meetings.

An "open door policy" was another strategy used for promoting communication. Any student, parent, or teacher who needed to resolve a problem had the opportunity to speak to the principal directly. Several faculty interviewed stated that even if the problem was personal, the principal would try to be of assistance.

Regarding communication between teachers, most faculty interviewed indicated that opportunities for communication with peers from the same department were numerous; and communication with teachers from different departments was improving because of increased opportunities for all teachers to communicate with each other.

Faculty members also stated that in general, communication between school personnel and parents had improved. Several faculty members indicated that they communicated with parents more frequently each year.

> I have communicated with parents a lot more this year than in the past. Not as much as I would like but a lot more.

> [Communication has] improved, as we have come closer to the parents of our students.
>
> I can call a parent any time I want; I don't need the principal's permission.
>
> Last school year, I started calling students and parents at home on Sundays, about both positive and negative matters. I might call just one parent per class, but word gets around that I called that parent. Some students even ask me why didn't I call their parents! I do a lot of parent conferences that aren't even during my conference period.

Improved communication channels between teachers and parents resulted because administrators greatly encouraged teachers to keep in close contact with parents, especially those parents of students who were failing classes. Parents, too, were encouraged to become more involved with the education of their children, and the "parent room" was established to make them feel more welcome at the school. As a result, parents became visible on campus. It was anticipated that increasing parental involvement would continue to be a goal for each school year in the future.

Decision-making. Faculty interviewed in the early years of the research project mentioned that the principal ultimately made decisions. However, several campus council members interviewed later in the study indicated that the council had more influence on decisions in comparison to past school years. Furthermore, council members mentioned that they had learned how to lobby to get their requests met. When major decisions needed to be made, campus council members were often asked to discuss the issues with the faculty from their departments, to survey staff, and to return to the next campus council meeting with feedback. Sometimes an *ad hoc* committee was established to study an issue and formulate recommendations. Although recommendations from these committees or from the departments were not followed in every case, most faculty members interviewed stated that their input was considered in important matters.

Ineffective Leadership Strategies

Although numerous effective leadership strategies have been discussed, a few ineffective leadership strategies were mentioned in interviews with faculty and administrators. One entailed the continued need for campus council members to be trained in decision-making. During the 1991–92 school year, faculty interviewed mentioned concerns about the need for knowledge and expertise on the part of individuals involved in decision-making. During the 1992–93 school year, however, opportunities for such training were not provided. Several campus council members who were interviewed at the end of the 1992–93 school year continued to voice concerns about the need for training.

A second ineffective leadership strategy, which was mentioned by the principal, involved monitoring of teachers. The principal had eliminated an extra conference period that had been specifically provided for department heads. By eliminating this conference period, department heads had more time for tutoring students but did not have sufficient time to monitor teachers in their departments. As a result, department heads were later provided with an extra conference period once again.

Contextual Factors

Numerous factors in the school context were considered helpful in reaching school improvement goals. However, other factors were perceived to be impediments to improvement. The following sections discuss these contextual factors.

Factors that Facilitated Improvement

According to faculty interviewed, several factors were believed to facilitate Border High's efforts toward reaching its goals for school improvement. Resources as well as state and local policies were mentioned as facilitative factors. Other facilitative factors mentioned included attitudes and beliefs, relationships and norms.

Parents. Parents were utilized as resources for achieving school improvement. Many parents were recruited to provide teachers with clerical assistance. Moreover, several parent leaders presented information to other parents during parenting sessions. In addition, regional service center personnel contributed to school improvement. Assistance from the regional educational service center, especially from the PSI Coordinator, helped the school work toward achieving PSI goals. The principal, too, was well known for being generous in providing resources, sometimes dipping into his own pocket to meet the immediate need of a student or teacher.

Student Leaders. During the 1993–94 school year, Border High had an especially strong student body president who wanted academic opportunities to be equal for students, regardless of their income or academic status. Specifically, summer school was available free-of-charge to students whose performance fell below a certain level, and the student president worked to make it possible for higher-performing students who wanted to get ahead to attend summer school as well. The president, who had had no more advantages growing up than other students at the school, had the total support of the principal.

Partnership Schools Initiative. Probably the most important factor that facilitated school improvement involved the Partnership Schools Initiative and its flexibility with state policies. The school was permitted to reduce the number of days students attended school, thus increasing the number of days for staff development. Because of overcrowding, the administrators also sought permission to allow only the students being tested to attend school on testing days; students who were not being tested were to be dismissed on testing days. Unfortunately, the district office did not always allow Border High to exercise the flexibility allowed by the Texas Education Agency, because it did not want Border High to have any privileges that the new high school did not have. Since the new high school was not a PSI school, it was more difficult for it to get a waiver. Hence, tested and non-tested students were both required to attend Border High on testing days even though Border High was eligible for a waiver to modify that requirement because of its PSI status.

Attitudes and beliefs. Many faculty members stated in interviews that the principal's attitudes toward students facilitated school improvement. The principal was perceived as being an individual who was very understanding and who truly loved the students. As a result, the principal focused on the needs of students over other concerns. Certain attitudes on the part of teachers also promoted school improvement. According to some of the faculty interviewed, most teachers at Border High had a vested interest in seeing their students succeed. Since the majority of teachers at the school were Hispanic and had always lived in the community, many teachers felt that when the students at Border High failed, the whole community failed. However when students succeeded, teachers also succeeded.

Relationships. Teachers seemed to collaborate each year to a greater extent than in the previous year. Since teachers were seen as part of the team to improve students' learning, they were provided opportunities for contributing ideas and solutions to school-related issues. Most teachers interviewed felt comfortable speaking to department heads as well as to administrators about their concerns. Teachers also felt increasingly responsible for the degree to which students learned. Teachers not only felt better about working together, but they also encouraged parents to become more involved at school. The administrative team required that teachers keep in close contact with the parents of students who were failing. As a result, teachers were aware that parents must be kept abreast of their children's progress in school. The development of relationships between school personnel and the community as a whole was also encouraged.

Factors that Impeded Improvement

Physical arrangements and lack of resources were seen as impediments to school improvement. Furthermore, many of the faculty interviewed mentioned political factors and the school schedule as impediments.

Physical arrangements. Because of the layout of the buildings, teachers at Border High felt isolated from peers unless they made a concerted effort to communicate and collaborate. Also, space was extremely limited. The school was already crowded when 10 of 32 portables were removed from the campus before the start of the 1992–93 school year, in anticipation of a decline in enrollment that never occurred. The decline was projected because the number of ninth and tenth graders being transferred out was expected to exceed the number of juniors and seniors being transferred in. Although enrollment never actually declined, the ten portables were never replaced; thus, some teachers "floated" from classroom to classroom in order to teach classes. This situation gave rise to low teacher morale and high frustration, because teachers could not get their job done. Instruction was obstructed and this is reflected in the comments of teachers and administrators:

> I can't be in my room because a floating teacher is using it.
>
> Central office took away several portables. We are still crowded. Teachers move from place to place, and this hinders instruction.
>
> I float from room to room.
>
> During my conference period, I can't be in my room because a floating teacher is using it. I have to work early or late to set up bulletin boards or organize materials in my classroom.

Although several faculty interviewed stated that the physical setting impeded school improvement and collaboration, teachers who mentioned this factor often indicated that staff members attempted to overcome such an obstacle.

Resources. A lack of financial resources was seen as an impediment according to all staff members who were interviewed. During the early part of May 1993, faculty interviewed were keenly aware that school supplies and other resources would be limited for the remainder of the school year. A need for more flexibility in using what financial resources were available was mentioned by the principal, who felt that rigid fiscal policies made it difficult to deal with special circumstances affecting students, staff, chaperones, and even consultants providing staff development. Once again, staff members stated that they attempted to overcome these obstacles.

Political factors. Thirdly, politics was mentioned as an impeding factor. Football and politics were the reason Border High remained one high school on two campuses rather than two separate high schools. Border High staff reported that political factors prevented the district from establishing two four-year high schools long after a second high school had become inevitable:

> Football and politics were the reason [Border High] remained one high school, with a lower 9–10 campus and an upper 11–12 campus, both of which were the '[mascot name deleted]' football team. Parents thought there'd be a better team if the players were picked from as many students as possible.
>
> The board plays politics. We should have had two four-year high schools three to four years ago. We need more political courage on the board and among politicians.
>
> Way too much money is put into athletics in proportion to the number of students touched or benefited by athletics. The male coaches get more than the female coaches. Football gets more assistants. There's inequity in athletics all around. We ought to have a female athletic director.

Numerous staff members indicated that many decisions affecting students and staff at Border High were influenced by continued rivalry between Border High and the new high school:

> We need a liaison to male students; when [he] resigned to take another position, his liaison position was transferred to the [new high school].
>
> The split of the two schools: the [other] high school has a new campus and new resources. Even *students* have sour grapes about that; teachers, too.
>
> We don't have computers here They have them at [the new] high school. We gripe about this type of inequity
>
> We are always compared to the other campus. Central Office pressures [Border High] and compares us to the other campus.

> We are 'the other school,' always being compared to [the new] high school. District office tells us to check what [the new] high school is doing.

The administrators at Border High had the feeling that their proposals for improvement were not judged by the district office on their own merits but always in relation to the other high school. They were permitted to pursue block scheduling, for example, only if the other high school agreed to implement block scheduling as well. Politics also affected the attainment of school goals because a few administrators held political offices; thus, their roles at school were perceived to be affected to a certain degree by the demands of the political offices to which they had been elected.

Conclusion

School improvement efforts at Border High were propelled by the following factors:

- changes in grade-level composition that occurred from 1981 to 1992, and the destabilizing effect that these changes had on students and staff as they were moved from school to school
- ineffective communication among staff members and between staff and administrators
- the composition of the student population—a large majority of at-risk students
- huge size of the campus
- lack of parental involvement

The three-pronged approach to "re-culture" the school included the following strategies: (1) changing staff's attitudes and mental models through monthly staff development sessions; (2) heightening students' attitudes and expectations through retreats and Saturday workshops; and (3) improving parents' understanding of their role in children's learning through parenting classes and workshops for parents. In addition, the unique relationship that the Partnership Schools Initiative engendered between the school and the agencies that oversee it has offered valuable lessons about systemic reform.

The Partnership Schools Initiative was a collaboration between a selected school (such as Border High), the regional education service center in the area, and the state education agency. In this three-tiered structure, Border High worked with the PSI coordinator at Region One Education Service Center, who in turn acted as a mentor and go-between, enhancing coordination between Border High and the Texas Education Agency.

The most significant steps toward accomplishing the PSI goals involved a series of monthly staff development sessions. According to the faculty interviewed, not only were these sessions more frequent but they were evidently of much higher quality than past in-services. The first session, conducted in September 1992, focused on Life Management Skills (LMS). This inservice was particularly well received. By participating in various activities and working in groups, teachers had a chance to get to know one another better.

Teachers and staff had other opportunities to become better acquainted and thus improve their working relationships. The PSI Coordinator facilitated in-service sessions during which staff members worked alternately in small and large groups to review and revise the campus improvement plan every year. Teachers also worked together to investigate and make a decision regarding the implementation of block scheduling and a more effective discipline management plan. The Campus Council was another opportunity for teachers and staff to influence school operations.

As teachers and staff worked together toward achieving specific goals, they began to bond as a staff and to develop leadership skills. Teacher leaders had opportunities to receive training at the Region One Education Service Center and return to the campus as trainers, providing staff development to other staff members. Although staff appreciated the quality of outside personnel involved in staff development sessions, they were also pleased with the quality of staff development provided by campus personnel.

Interaction and bonding between staff gave rise to school pride. Students also simultaneously developed pride in their school. As a result of the LMS retreats for at-risk students, Saturday workshops, and the change in teachers' attitudes toward students, students had the opportunity to focus on how they felt about their school, how they related to their peers, and how they communicated their feelings to Border High staff, to their friends, and to their parents.

As staff and students' pride in their school increased, parents also developed pride in Border High. The principal wanted parents to feel that Border High was *their* school—not just their child's. He found ways to build bridges between the parents and the school. Activities for parents stressed how important it was to be involved with their children's school, to communicate with the teachers, and to help out when possible.

Border High continues up the road to success—one step at a time. Like other schools, it has faced obstacles that have not been easy to overcome; however, staff are now more unified. As they continue to learn to work together, the road will become smoother and gentler. A different picture of the future is coming into sharper focus. The story of Border High highlights the value of setting a goal to improve school culture.

Elements of Vision at the Schools

Many of the elements of vision evident at the schools corresponded to the characteristics identified by Stedman (1987) as making schools effective for all children, regardless of socioeconomic background or ethnicity. Stedman was particularly critical of the five correlates popularized by Edmonds. "What is staggering about all of this is that a careful reading of the effective schools literature shows that the five- or six-factor formula cannot be substantiated. The vast majority of the studies, including well-known ones...provide little support for these factors" (p. 215). First, he argues, many schools that have the five or six factors still have extremely low levels of achievement, with students averaging several years below grade level. Second, the findings from many studies challenge the factors themselves. "Contrary to the traditional effective schools formula," Stedman wrote, "teachers in the ineffective schools held higher expectations for grade-level achievement and were more likely to accept responsibility for their students' performance" (p. 216).

Using more stringent criteria to distinguish effective from ineffective schools, Stedman found that "successful schools actively developed students' racial and ethnic identities and paid more individual attention to students. Cultural pluralism was important yet overlooked by previous reviewers of the literature" (p. 218). Altogether, Stedman identified nine correlates "supported by studies of the best schools in the literature" (p. 218). These were:

- ethnic and racial pluralism
- an accepting and supportive environment
- personal attention to students
- student responsibility for school affairs
- academically rich programs
- teaching aimed at preventing academic problems
- skilled use and training of teachers
- parent participation
- shared governance with teachers and parents

The first six correlates deal with aspects of the school environment that directly affect students, while the last three deal more with the way teachers and parents are involved in school operations. The similarities between Stedman's first six correlates and the characteristics observed at the LFC school sites are striking. The characteristics of the school sites that reflect their vision of a positive school environment for students are delineated below.

Tailoring the School to Students' Cultural and Family Backgrounds, Building on Children's Self-esteem

At Green Country School and Crossroads Middle School, the superintendents articulated a vision based on their beliefs about the ethnicity and family background of the students they served. Green Country, for example, exemplified "actively developing the students' racial and ethnic identities" (Stedman, 1987). Upper-grade students participated in an Indian Heritage Club and elected a student as its chief, while students in the primary grades learned the Cherokee

Language. During their activities in the psychomotor center, they counted and talked in both English and Cherokee (Tsa-La-Gi). This bilingual approach was intended to balance the abilities of the children. Children more proficient in English naturally excelled when English was used, but those more proficient in Cherokee got a chance to "shine" when words were spoken in the Cherokee language.

The superintendent responsible for Crossroads Middle School, who had worked in a district with a high number of Navajo children, believed in treating the child holistically. "The Navajo children bring to the normal, typical school a very different cultural background and a very different family type," he explained. He rejected the junior high model in favor of the Family Plan, because he wanted the school environment to mirror a supportive family environment. Shuffling students from one classroom to another was dysfunctional, he thought, especially for students who needed a lot of closure. In addition to being supportive, the Family Plan was designed to encourage different racial and ethnic groups to mingle with each other. The Family Plan was "a deliberate arrangement that would begin to convey to kids that in this world we are in it together. We either survive together or go down together."

Sensitivity to children's self esteem was evident in all five schools, although this sensitivity was emphasized somewhat more at the elementary and middle schools than at the two high schools, which put relatively more emphasis on expectations and college and career preparation. Green Country School and Southeast Elementary, which served elementary students, both conveyed a strong sense of "family" or community in which staff worked well together and maintained a constant focus on the child. At Southeast Elementary, for example, staff emphasized the importance of caring for each child as one's own.

Fostering good social and life-coping skills in addition to academic skills

Crossroads Middle School launched a new program during the 1992–93 school year. This program, which was either called Project Taking Charge or RAPP (Responsible Academic and Personal Planning), taught students to take charge of their lives, their relationships, and their futures by heightening their awareness of their life goals, their support systems, their verbal and nonverbal communication, their personal responsibility, and their life choices. Border High organized workshops and retreats for students as well as teachers on Life Management Skills, a curriculum that covered the same types of topics as RAPP. This curriculum was originally developed for migrant students, so it acknowledged the unique hardships that students might have endured in the past, but fostered hope that students could rise above these hardships. The same message was conveyed in a program called Great Expectations, which was implemented at both Oklahoma sites. Great Expectations involved traditional teaching techniques, but it put unusual emphasis on instilling within students a sense of confidence and determination, a strong sense of direction in life, and resistance to negative influences in their environments. Some of the philosophy of Great Expectations was expressed succinctly in a quote by Charles Swindoll: "Attitude, to me, is more important than facts. It is more important than the past, than education, than money, than circumstances, than failures, than successes, than what other people think or say or do....The remarkable thing is that we have a choice every day regarding the attitude we will embrace for that day." (Swindoll, 1982, p. 206).

Offering a Variety of Learning Opportunities and Making Learning Fun

Staff's awareness of different learning styles was clearly evident at four of the five sites. Staff development sessions on this topic had been provided, and teachers reflected their growing awareness of learning styles in their talk and instructional approaches. Rather than talking generally about learning styles, teachers at Green Country specifically referred to their Cherokee students as right-brain or visual learners. With these children, verbal instructional methods were considered less effective than visual, auditory, or kinesthetic modalities. For this reason the school developed a psychomotor program in the 1980s wherein colors, shapes, manipulatives, and body movement reinforced the language and mathematical concepts the students were learning. Because test scores showed this program to be most effective with primary students, the psychomotor center was subsequently used in the kindergarten, first, and second grades.

Green Country was the only one of the site schools that explicitly linked academic learning to physical fitness. The school secured many resources that promoted physical fitness, including an aerobics center, a junior Olympic swimming pool, and a nature trail. In general the school offered a wide variety of activities before, during, and after school, in which learning was designed to be both active and fun.

At Southeast Elementary, staff encouraged children to express themselves creatively through the visual, performing, and literary arts. Skills were developed not in a separate and piecemeal fashion but as an integral part of whole language and experience-based instruction. Cooking, field trips, and an annual camp program of earth education called Sunship Earth were examples of this school's experience-based learning. Cooking was also common at Green Country, which emphasized experience-based learning as well. A program of language development through creative writing, for example, involved poems, plays, pantomime, and puppets.

Cameras, camcorders, and photofinishing equipment were used effectively at Green Country and Crossroads Middle School. Green Country offered a photography class as an elective for the older students, to introduce them to darkroom chemistry and techniques, while a sixth-grade teacher at Crossroads procured a grant of $1000 to use cameras as instructional aids. Through assignments that involved taking photographs, the teacher reinforced language and mathematical concepts. One assignment, for example, called for the students to take pictures that showed specific geometric shapes, while another assignment involved pictures showing different emotions. Although the logistics of keeping track of the cameras and film supplies were complex, this new approach elicited so much interest that it was even effective with one student who had previously been totally uncooperative with classroom activities and homework assignments.

Other teachers at Crossroads offered students job-shadowing opportunities, enabling students to accompany a pilot on a flight, for example, or assisting a veterinarian with surgery. At Delta High, a teacher succeeded in placing one of his students in a summer internship at a state university medical school. These examples illustrate efforts to provide experience-based learning and a wide variety of learning opportunities.

Giving Students Responsibility

According to Stedman (1987), "effective schools involved students in many of the day-to-day activities of running a school. Giving students responsibility produced several benefits, including improvements in discipline, self-esteem, and learning" (p. 221). Examples provided by Stedman included peer tutoring; supervising the cafeteria; establishing a "clean patrol"; appointing school-wide student "commissioners" for academics, discipline, and safety; and meetings with student council representatives to hear student concerns.

At Green Country, older students served as anchors on a television show that was broadcast daily over the school's own cable channel. Because the students learned how to forecast the weather in science class, they could include the weather forecast in the daily show. Younger students, participating in special class activities, were sometimes featured in the show.

Although Southeast Elementary was an elementary school, it stood above the rest in the degree of responsibility it gave its students. In addition to having a student council at the elementary level, Southeast Elementary implemented an innovative peer mediation program with the help of a local university. While the university had helped middle schools and high schools to implement such programs, Southeast Elementary was the first in the city to implement peer mediation at the elementary level. Beginning in 1992, 4th and 5th graders, nominated by their teachers with approval from their parents, were trained to be mediators in conflict situations at school. Like teachers, they were assigned "duty" on the playground. According to staff, this program heightened awareness of peaceful ways to resolve conflict dramatically.

Crossroads Middle School used mediation effectively to bring gangs under control. After additional security on the campus proved less than effective, the counselor began holding meetings with the two warring gangs, an approach he had read about in a newspaper. These meetings culminated in a peace agreement that established the school as a "neutral zone." In the peace agreement, the two gangs prohibited "tagging" (placing gang logos and other graffiti on public or private property) and "ranking" (soliciting new members) on the school grounds. According to the counselor, the gangs were very proud of their peace agreement. In addition, youth sought the counselor's help in getting out of the gangs.

Border High had a different approach to dealing with gangs and other problems. This school designated two staff members as "student liaisons" who served as full-time counselors for students. A man and a woman worked respectively with the male and female students, helping gang members and students who feared the gangs. The liaisons organized support group meetings, provided individual counseling, and served as advocates for students in matters involving their teachers or parents.

Enhancing Continuity for Students

Crossroads was restructured from a traditional junior high to a middle school, to ease the transition from elementary school to middle school for 6th, 7th, and 8th graders. After operating under the Family Plan for two years, the school tried a new approach designed to enhance continuity even further. It promoted the 7th grade students as a cohort to 8th grade, keeping their "families" intact. Although this scheme was abandoned the following year to address a concern that above-average, average, and below-average students were not evenly distributed across families, it indicated that continuity for students was important to the staff. It might also be noted that some of the staff expressed a desire in interviews to examine and revise the curriculum so that there would be more continuity and a more even flow of information from one grade to the next.

This same concern motivated Southeast Elementary to explore the Core Knowledge Curriculum (CKC) originally developed by E. D. Hirsch. Staff viewed CKC as a way to avoid gaps and overlaps in the curriculum, without taking on the daunting task of developing a school-wide curriculum themselves. By ensuring consistency within grades and coordinating instruction between grades, teachers could be sure of what students entering a certain grade knew and were able to do.

Seeking Positive Solutions to Problems

And finally, an element of vision common to these schools was the positive approach to problems, best exemplified by the peer mediation program at Southeast Elementary. This program was developed in response to an escalation of behavioral problems at the school. Likewise, the counselor at Crossroads Middle School, which had initially enhanced police security to deal with increased gang activity, used mediation more effectively with the gangs to formulate a peace agreement. To quote a teacher who was interviewed immediately after Southeast Elementary introduced peer mediation, these programs showed "how really effective the positive approach can be."

In sum, the following elements of vision were observed at one or more of the schools:

1. Tailoring schooling to students' cultural and family backgrounds, building on children's self esteem.
2. Fostering good social and life-coping skills.
3. Offering different learning opportunities for students with different learning styles. including experience-based learning, and making learning fun.
4. Giving responsibility to students.
5. Enhancing continuity for students.
6. Seeking positive solutions to problems.

These elements of vision, which are are found at various points in the site papers, reflect the type of schooling that the school sites aim to provide to their students. The strategies that the schools' leaders use to realize these elements of vision are discussed in the next section.

Leadership Strategies

To provide a framework for reporting observations and lessons learned, the school improvement process is seen as a progression of stages, beginning with getting the improvement effort started. After a school has initiated the process, it must maintain momentum by addressing needs and resolving problems that inevitably arise. Ideally, some of the strategies for maintaining momentum at a school will evolve into an increased capacity to respond to the ever-changing needs of students, the community, and society at large. When this happens, the school has successfully fostered a context or climate conducive to change.

A context conducive to change is one which allows a school to be flexible, responsive, and dynamic as it strives continuously to improve teaching and learning for students. Some elements of a context for change are the following: a norm of critical inquiry or self-evaluation, an expectation that the school will change to respond to students and constituents, a willingness to try new things, and a climate that allows people to take risks and that rewards positive change.

Getting started, maintaining momentum, and fostering a climate for change, then, are the stages of school improvement addressed below. In reality, fostering a context for change must occur to some extent within the first two stages. However, it is presented here as the third stage because it takes a long time to develop a context truly conducive to change.

Getting Started

School improvement begins with the notion that a better way is possible. Data may be compiled to assess a school's current status and to make comparisons with previous data, to spot trends across time. More commonly, however, schools assess their current status in relation to that of other schools. While schools may use test scores or other data to make direct comparisons, often the assessment process is less formal. A hunch that a better way is possible is often based on knowing what other schools are doing and pursuing what sounds promising for one's own school.

Two decisions are critical during this first stage of the improvement process: (1) deciding what the school needs most to improve, and (2) deciding between partial change and comprehensive, school-wide change. Regarding the first decision, possibilities include new programs, changes in school culture, and modifications to the organizational structure. The second decision should usually follow the first. There are no hard and fast rules, but leaders should carefully weigh the advantages and disadvantages of partial change versus school-wide change because the decision has long-term consequences. Insights on these two key decisions are discussed along with other lessons from the sites below.

Learning From Other Schools

At four of the six schools, a common strategy in the early stages of school improvement was to arrange for staff to visit other schools. When Road's End School established three committees to improve the school environment, everyone was encouraged to visit a particular school district that had used the effective schools correlates as its guide to school improvement. The superintendent at

Crossroads Middle School initially sent two counselors to witness the Family Plan operating in another district and subsequently sent more staff to other schools to see the Family Plan in operation. Southeast Elementary staff went to England to study the open classroom concept. "To read about it falls short," stated the principal at the time, "we had to get into other schools." Delta High School sent teachers and at least one parent to a school in Alabama where Ventures in Education had been implemented. A common reaction: "They aren't doing anything we couldn't do."

Delta High staff visited schools that had been in the process of implementing block scheduling for different periods of time, varying from just four months to four years. This series of school visits appeared to be an excellent strategy for implementation planning, because school staff could see both the problems that might arise early on and the eventual outcomes after problems had been resolved.

School visits seemed to help in accomplishing three purposes:

(1) developing a common understanding of the change to be put in place;
(2) examining the details of operation and asking questions about implementation; and
(3) inspiring staff to want the change.

But school visits and meetings with other schools can also have effects that go beyond a particular change to be implemented. The external facilitator at one of the developmental sites, commenting about the school's principal, said "He seems to grow every time he returns from a meeting with other schools." Citing several specific examples, she attributed this growth to two factors: time to reflect and the opportunity to see distinctions more clearly. In this case, the principal saw more clearly the difference between having a vision and articulating the vision to the people of the school. On several occasions, the principal expressed his appreciation for the opportunity to learn from other schools.

Giving First Priority to Students

At some of the sites, staff spoke of their leaders as giving high priority to students. The principal at Border High was quite vocal about this. He urged staff repeatedly to "love the students" or treat them in a caring manner. If a teacher and a student were both waiting outside his office to see him, he saw the student first. It was evident that students, in turn, liked the principal and felt comfortable with him. When 28 seniors were interviewed at the school, they expressed confidence that they were successful in and out of school and often defined success in terms of positive relationships. When asked what teachers did to help them learn, they mentioned not only academic help like tutoring but also interpersonal help like encouraging and motivating them. Although the students characterized some teachers as not helpful, the strong emphasis during the interviews on positive relationships between students and teachers suggests that school leaders successfully engendered a caring climate in a very large high school (Hord, 1995).

At Crossroads Middle School, staff repeatedly mentioned that the superintendent and assistant superintendent put students first. There was no doubt in their minds that the Family Plan was geared for students, especially at-risk students, who needed a sense of belonging and a supportive environment to thrive in school. If putting students first is in the forefront of teachers' minds, they will feel compelled to assess how a proposed change will benefit students, as opposed to assessing the change with respect to other perhaps relevant but less important factors.

Southeast Elementary began each day with Morning Meeting in which students read stories or poems, showed off artwork, or shared birthdays and other special family events. Morning Meeting typified the culture of the school as a caring and happy place for students, who were treated with respect and given opportunities to assume school responsibilities.

Demonstrating Unusual Success With Students

At Green Country, a professor from a nearby university, renowned for her research on learning and brain functions, demonstrated unusual success working with students whom the teachers had identified as their "most challenging." In a single afternoon, the students were learning and showing enthusiasm for learning. The effect was much the same with the Marva Collins training, which both Oklahoma schools received. "My expectations went way up," was the way the superintendent at Road's End School put it. Demonstrating unusual success with students raised expectations and inspired staff to higher goals. The training, in effect, set a new standard for teaching and learning at the school. Raising expectations was also a goal of the Ventures program at Delta High; and it was central to Border High's efforts to improve school culture.

Deciding What the School Needs Most

Delta High seized the opportunity to implement a new program, Crossroads Middle School modified its organizational structure, Southeast Elementary revised its school schedule, and Road's End School adopted the effective schools correlates as one approach to school improvement. Both Oklahoma schools implemented Great Expectations, which emphasized student motivation and confidence, while Southeast Elementary and Border High both worked to foster a caring environment. The case studies, taken together, illustrate that schools can choose from many options for accomplishing improvement. Unfortunately, schools often respond to a mandate or seize an opportunity without truly assessing whether either matches what the school needs most. Green Country's annual needs assessment appeared to be the most formal process for determining what the school needed most, but informal, more intuitive approaches for identifying top-priority needs often seemed very much on target.

The principal at Border High was an excellent example of a school leader who sought as his first task to "re-culture" the school. With an elementary school background, he saw immediately that the teachers in the high school were too focused on their subject areas—that they needed a more holistic approach that considered the students' social and emotional needs along with their academic development. When asked why he put so much emphasis on changing attitudes, the principal cited stories of teachers failing large percentages of their students but doing little to help the students succeed. A small incident—a teacher sending a student to the principal's office because he did not have a pencil—was a big signal to the principal that attitudes needed to change. He wanted teachers to be more caring and to feel more personally responsible for the success of all students, whether the students were theirs or not.

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The four principals at Southeast Elementary also focused on the culture of the school. The first principal created a child-centered environment based on her understanding of children's natural tendencies, treated teachers in much the same manner that she wanted them to treat students, and empowered teachers to solve problems and explore new ideas by establishing Faculty Study as a time and place to meet. The second principal engendered a caring and happy place for students, emphasizing the guiding principle "Be kind and share." The third principal heightened the faculty's sense of professionalism, establishing a professional library and encouraging staff to join professional organizations. So much attention had been given to school culture at Southeast Elementary that when the fourth principal came on board, he saw a need to put relatively more emphasis on the curriculum and modern use of technology.

Cultivating Good Working Relationships

A common strategy for cultivating good working relationships among staff and students at the sites was school-wide projects. Schools find that school-wide projects rally staff and students around a common focus. Community Day at Border High and Green Country's monthly community parties serve as examples of school-wide projects that built team spirit. A beautiful example at Delta High was the school's involvement in GlobalFest at which different groups of students depicted different countries around the world. All of these events enhanced school pride.

Faced with teachers who did not even know each other, much less work well together, Border High's principal relied heavily on teacher in-services. For example, the first Life Management Skills (LMS) workshop was held in September 1992, to improve relationships among the teachers, students, and parents. In-services for teachers, workshops and retreats for students, and meetings and classes for parents were the primary vehicles for enhancing school pride, heightening expectations of oneself and others, and fostering mutual accountability for the students' success.

Good working relationships can culminate in the creation of a learning community, as exemplified by Southeast Elementary School. The concept of a learning community is based on the notion of a "learning organization," as described by Senge (1990). Senge stresses the importance of learning, systems thinking, and open dialogue in organizations that solve problems effectively and improve continuously. One aspect of a learning community is the objectivity required for "seeing how our own actions create the problems we experience." Morning Meeting, Faculty Study, a heightened sense of professionalism, and the caring environment engendered by the second principal at Southeast Elementary all contributed to the development of a learning community in which staff learned along *with* students, shared information and new ideas, and took risks.

Developing a Common Vision

Much has been written about the need for a common vision of the change to be put in place or the end result of a change. Southeast Elementary is a striking example of a school that developed and articulated a common vision. When asked individually about the school's goals, improvement efforts, and unfolding events, staff gave remarkably similar answers, reflecting participation by all in the weekly Faculty Study sessions. At Green Country School, it was not so much a common vision as a common theory of learning that staff articulated. Independently of each other, teachers described their students as right-brain or visual learners; they strove for active learning: and they stressed the importance of high self-esteem to a child's success.

The importance of a common vision stands out in bold relief when a school has not yet developed one. This was understandably the case at the two developmental sites. At Delta High, for example, tenured school leaders wanted Ventures in Education to become a school-wide program. But the new principal wanted the high school to offer VIE as only one of three major programs. As a program for students who wanted a rigorous curriculum that would prepare them for prestigious secondary institutions and earn them scholarships, VIE appeared to be well on its way. However, as a program designed to upgrade student achievement overall, implementation faltered. For example, the national Ventures organization wanted all teachers to participate in VIE-supported staff development. But participation by "non-Ventures" teachers at Delta High was optional, and it was reported that few teachers chose to participate.

There seemed to be a tendency to leave paraprofessionals or even key volunteers out of the visioning process. Although few paraprofessionals were interviewed, those who were seemed unable to articulate the school's goals as well as regular teachers did. If this was truly the case, it is particularly unfortunate since paraprofessionals often have strong ties to the community and greater familiarity with the local culture.

Reviewing the School's Vision, Goals, or Operating Principles

Southeast Elementary saw its curriculum as a reflection of its vision. In a series of meetings to consider the Core Knowledge Curriculum for possible adoption, staff reviewed their "operating principles" before delving into this curriculum. In this way, the vision for the school was fresh in their minds as they worked to align the CKC with their vision. At an in-service session near the end of each school year, Border High involved staff in a review and revision of its campus improvement plan. All 160 professional and 60 paraprofessional staff members at this large campus worked alternately in small and large groups to review the plan in a single day. This demonstrated that even a very large faculty can participate in the vision-building exercise of revising a school improvement plan. As these two schools illustrate, setting aside an in-service day to focus on the school's goals or operating principles is one way to develop and communicate a shared vision.

While a couple of the sites focused on implementing particular programs or practices, other schools concentrated on changing attitudes, expectations, relationships, or other aspects of school philosophy or culture. Border High, especially, emphasized school culture in its series of monthly staff development sessions. Several sessions focused on Life Management Skills (LMS); another session dealt with conflict resolution; and, on one occasion, staff watched students role-play ways that teachers treat students. Training at Green Country promoted a "can do" outlook, and the Marva Collins training at both Green Country and Road's End School emphasized high expectations, respect for students, and instilling personal responsibility for one's own success in life.

Deciding Between Partial Change and Comprehensive School-wide Change

The choice between partial change and school-wide change is a critical decision with no hard-and-fast rules. Crossroads Middle School implemented the Family Plan school-wide, while Delta High offered the Ventures program only to students who met certain minimum criteria. To phrase it as Shakespeare might have, School-wide vs. not school-wide: That is the question—the question that any school contemplating a major change must confront. School leaders should weigh carefully the advantages and disadvantages early on, taking into account school goals, financial resources, political climate, and many other factors.

School-wide change requires *everyone* to have the skills, commitment, and tolerance for frustration that the change demands. Since everyone must also have the necessary resources such as new books or laboratory equipment, a school may choose partial change either because it cannot provide needed resources to everyone or because some staff are not likely to use the resources. This was the case at Delta High where a faculty member failed to use expensive books bought for her. This pitfall, while not totally eliminated, is easier to avoid if a change affects only the most committed teachers. Further, a partial change may reward and energize teachers who are exceptionally skilled or committed.

A partial change is easier to manage and thus, more likely to be successful than school-wide change. The success of the new program or practice sells it to others. In the words of one administrator at Delta High, "It's hard to argue with success." Based on information from all the sites, there is wisdom in this argument. With the exception of die-hard resisters, teachers become open to change if they can see dramatic improvements in students as a result of the change. Openness to the Family Plan at Crossroads Middle School and adoption of the Shurley Method at Road's End School are just two examples from the sites that illustrate increased receptivity to change when the change clearly benefits students.

On the other hand, even a partial change demands so much attention and so many resources that teachers (and even students) who have not been involved in the new effort tend to feel slighted. To them, the program has been given top priority at their expense; and their feelings of jealousy and rejection often result in conflicts that can divert attention away from implementation of the change. In addition, even those who were not involved in the change effort need to know about the change, because students and parents will ask them about the change, as the teacher at Delta High pointed out.

Change affecting only part of a school necessarily draws organizational lines between that part and the rest of the school. And if those organizational lines coincide with social, ethnic, or political divisions that already exist, the change will exacerbate those divisions. Because school-wide change avoids any impression of preferential treatment or discrimination toward particular teachers or students, schools already divided by factions should, if at all possible, lean heavily toward choosing school-wide change.

Sharing Leadership and Decision-Making

Just as developing a common vision is touted in the research literature, so too is sharing leadership. Southeast Elementary is an excellent example of a school where shared leadership was working. Faculty Study provided the faculty with a forum for discussing issues and making decisions, and the teachers were tolerant of conflict, frustration, and the slow-going process of reaching consensus. When teachers were interviewed independently of each other, they exhibited a common understanding of the school's goals, unfolding events, and the reasons behind decisions regarding school operations.

When staff first began exploring the Core Knowledge Curriculum, a teacher-leader initially spearheaded the effort with the principal, while she was on sabbatical and had extra time. While some teachers reported in later interviews that this teacher was still leading the implementation effort, others, including those who attended the annual CKC conference, felt that CKC had become more of a "grass roots" effort. In their view, more faculty members were showing initiative by talking, sharing, and coaching each other on CKC. Even the teacher-leader did not see herself playing as strong a leadership role as she had previously played. "Leadership has spread throughout the building," was the way one person summed it up. Implementation of an effort that is initiated by a teacher-leader, then, may gradually evolve to become an effort of shared leadership.

Although the superintendent at Green Country School was a forceful leader who clearly expected staff to obtain his approval for new ideas, leadership was, nevertheless, shared to a considerable extent. The school relied heavily on surveys, committees, and informal communication at school activities and events to obtain input from staff, upper-grade students, parents, and members of the community, including former students. An annual needs assessment determined goals for the next school year, and ad hoc surveys and committees played a regular part in decisions regarding new grants and programs to pursue during the year.

The two developmental sites put forth an effort to share leadership and decision making more than they had in the past. Delta High established several committees to reform school operations, and Border High established a campus council and a communication "relay" within departments. Department heads surveyed the teachers within each department for their input on various issues, and then reported the teachers' opinions at their next meeting. For some issues, the administrators established an *ad hoc* committee to study the issue and formulate recommendations. Although the principal expressed relief that he no longer had to have all the answers, both administrators and staff occasionally reverted to their old roles. The principal did not always abide by a committee's recommendations, and the staff often turned to the principal for answers, or directed criticism toward him concerning a group decision.

Following Through

When administrators fail to follow through on a committee's recommendations, this has grievous effects on the climate for change on a campus. The staff or parents who serve on a committee invest much time and energy studying, debating, and resolving issues; and they tend to feel tremendously discouraged when their recommendations are not adopted. Moreover, they are likely to be skeptical or even cynical the next time a committee is set up to explore an issue. The same can be said of surveys. This is why staff at Green Country School emphasized the importance of follow-through. Committees and surveys were regular vehicles for change at Green Country, but they were effective only because the staff were prepared and committed to following through on the recommendations that resulted from a survey or from a committee's deliberations.

Avoiding False Hopes

Ambivalence about the Ventures program at Delta High stemmed partly from the manner in which it was first presented. One teacher said it well:

> I think there is a perception among the teachers that Ventures was sold to us as a way to improve learning across the board for these at-risk students. It's not doing that, it's doing things for the upper group. What we were told it was going to do is not what it's doing. That's raised animosity towards the program.

In their eagerness to persuade or to allay concerns, leaders may be tempted to create false expectations of the change they want to put in place. Down the road, however, this may create problems even more serious than the original concerns. To prevent this from happening, one might plan early on to implement the change in stages. This was a deliberate strategy that Green Country used to develop its psychomotor program. It developed a curriculum first for the primary grades (K–3), second for the upper elementary grades (4–6), and last for the seventh and eighth graders in the school.

Preparing Staff for Problems to Come

Staff seem to cope better with problems if they are prepared for problems to arise as they proceed. At Southeast Elementary, for example, faculty members were quite philosophical about the difficulties and ambiguities associated with adopting and implementing changes. They accepted these problems as natural to the process. During a visit to another school, staff should ask what pitfalls the other school has encountered in the change process and then share that information with fellow staff upon their return. Whether informed of specific problems to look out for or forewarned generally that problems will arise, staff are more likely to persevere if most of the problems they confront do not come as a surprise.

Fullan and Miles (1992) stressed the need a frame of mind that "acknowledges that we don't necessarily know all the answers, that is conducive to developing solutions as we go along, and that sustains our commitment and persistence to stay with the problem until we get somewhere" (p. 746).

Maintaining Momentum

Once a school improvement effort has begun, professional development, open communication, and a willingness to confront rather than avoid problems are keys to sustaining momentum.

Investing in Individual and Group-Based Professional Development

At Road's End School, several different types of training had a significant impact on the elementary school teachers. A teacher described the superintendent as "having a knack for identifying good training." One type of training was based on the philosophy and teaching approach of Marva Collins, whose success with at-risk youth in Chicago led her to start her own exemplary school and training program. The superintendent and two elementary teachers attended Marva Collins's training in Chicago. Later, all the elementary teachers traveled to Oklahoma City to hear Marva Collins speak about her approach and philosophy.

Stipends and other financial support were used to encourage faculty members to attend university classes or training sessions on their own. The community association at Southeast Elementary helped make it possible for staff to attend the national conference on the Core Knowledge Curriculum. Nearly the entire faculty attended this conference during the 1992–93 school year; and six teachers attended during the 1993–94 school year, some for the second time. Those who attended felt that it was beneficial to learn from others who were implementing the curriculum and to hear of their success. They, in turn, shared their experiences with others and provided advice to "some who were kind of lost." As a result, they returned to school feeling good about the quality of their own work. The conference was, in the words of one attendee, a "shot in the arm."

School leaders should take care not to overwhelm staff with too much training. At Delta High, where training was provided on cooperative learning, problem-based learning, paired problem-solving, and Touchstones, staff felt inundated with too many workshops. According to some teachers, the workshops either did not meet their needs, or they took time that was needed for classroom preparation. According to one teacher, "we always had motivational speakers come in and finally we rose up and said 'we're not going to be motivated anymore.' " When Road's End School offered training on effective schools, Marva Collins, and the Shurley Method, all in one year, staff felt overwhelmed; they wanted the chance to concentrate on "doing one thing well."

Reaping Rewards from Investment in Training

To reap rewards from an investment in training, it is necessary to allow staff to refresh their memories of the training periodically and to monitor their use of what they have learned. Many schools fall short on these two essentials.

At Border High, the external facilitator debriefed school leaders at the end of training, when their memories were fresh. She debriefed them again a few days later, when the main principles they had learned stood out because the details had faded. As the time after training continues to elapse, staff need manuals, curriculum guides, videotapes, or other materials, to refresh their memories. They also need time to review these materials. School leaders should ensure that these materials are provided at the initial training. Later they should set aside time for staff to review the materials, both individually and as a group.

When Delta High launched Ventures in Education, the school had a legacy of providing training that staff ignored. Teachers attended training to meet their in-service requirements, but they did little to incorporate what they had learned in their classrooms. Ventures changed all that. According to staff at Delta High, the former principal monitored the effects of training by observing teachers in their classrooms and discussing their use of newly learned instructional strategies at the end of class. Schools in general should make more of an effort to follow up on teacher training.

Southeast Elementary teachers' approach to CKC serves as an example of how to maximize the benefits of staff development. At the first CKC conference they attended, teachers met periodically between sessions to share what they were learning and to contemplate the possibilities of CKC for their school. At a second CKC conference, each participating teacher followed her particular grade-level sequence throughout the conference and subsequently took ideas back to her grade-level colleagues at the school. Sending staff to the CKC conference for two consecutive years suggests that Southeast Elementary was concentrating on "doing one thing well." The school is already planning its delegation to the next conference, mixing new and repeat attendees to provide continuity, as was done this year.

Citing a RAND study, the National Education Commission on Time and Learning (1994) reported that the greatest resistance of all to the re-allocation of time is "the conviction that the only valid use of teachers' time is 'in front of the class;' the assumption that reading, planning, collaboration with other teachers and professional development are somehow a waste of time." This attitude is disturbing in light of the following information, also reported by the Commission on Time and Learning:

- New teaching strategies can require as much as 50 hours of instruction, practice, and coaching before teachers become comfortable with them
- Successful urban schools need up to 50 days of external technical assistance for coaching and strengthening staff skills through professional development.

The case studies of the sites suggest that to reap maximum rewards from training and staff development on a new program or practice, six interrelated ingredients appear to be essential: (1) training, (2) resources, including time, (3) encouragement to try, (4) practice, (5) follow-up in the form of coaching, technical assistance, retraining, or revisiting what was learned, and last but not least, (6) seeing rewarding gains in student performance or behavior. The last ingredient, gains in student performance, appears to generate the most enthusiasm, such as the enthusiasm witnessed at Road's End School for the Shurley Method and at Crossroads Middle School for the Family Plan.

Raising Expectations of Teachers and Parents

When a teacher at Road's End School was asked if she had experienced changes in her thinking during the implementation process, she answered, "The main thing was my expectations have come way up. I've seen a more positive change in my attitude. I'm not saying I was totally negative, but I did have some negative feelings. But my expectations have risen a great deal. Now I have a more positive outlook on things." Concerning parents, the same teacher remarked:

> I had a few parents come in and read about the spelling list from Open Court and the vocabulary. And all these parents said, 'Are you kidding?' They could not believe that their children were learning some of these words that they themselves could not pronounce. We had to convince them that their children were capable. They just have to work a little harder at it. We had to raise their expectations as well as our own as teachers.

Providing Needed Materials and Equipment

Some of the sites tended to fall short on providing materials and equipment in a timely manner. At Delta High, implementation of the Ventures program was delayed because science laboratory equipment was not yet available, causing frustration from the beginning. At Southeast Elementary, teachers expressed frustration that they did not have the materials they needed for the Core Knowledge Curriculum. "We aren't where we need to be in ordering materials," the principal stated. Factors that accounted for this problem included time needed to identify what materials were needed, delays in processing orders, limited budgets, and the necessity of applying for grants to pay for materials. However understandable these problems may be, staff feel stymied if they do not have materials or equipment when they need them.

Keeping Communication Open

A simple but basic approach to keeping communication flowing is to maintain an "open door." According to staff at Green Country, for example, the leader is always willing to listen when someone comes to him with a problem or issue. He usually responds by suggesting ideas for the person to consider, leaving the final decision up to that person. The principal at Border High is also known for keeping his door open despite the large number of students and staff at his school.

Several teachers at Road's End School described the contrast between the new superintendent and his predecessors. While his predecessors would not share critical information with the teachers (such as test scores) and even discouraged teachers from talking to one another, this superintendent actively encouraged interaction and collaboration. To quote a veteran teacher with 22 years of experience, "Last year was my worst year of teaching; this year was my best."

Retreating

In the middle of a school improvement effort, it appears to be common to retreat from one or more aspects of the improvement effort. Things that are tried always need adjustment in the change process, but some are outright abandoned. So, for example, Delta High retreated when VIE students found the amount of homework to be too burdensome, to the point where some students threatened to drop out of the Ventures program. In response, the VIE teachers met to devise ways that they could coordinate their assignments and even out the workload for students. Border High abandoned the school-within-a- school in part because of coordination problems between those in the school-within-a- school and the teachers in the main part of the school. Crossroads Middle School promoted each family of 7th graders as a cohort to the 8th grade during one school year, but abandoned the idea the next year because of concerns that high-performing and low-performing students were unevenly distributed across the two teams per grade. Retreating, which has been observed in other studies as well (Snyder, 1994; Fullan and Miles, 1992), appears to be a normal part of the change process.

Fostering a Climate Conducive to Change

A climate conducive to change means that conditions exist that facilitate change. If a school strives continually to improve teaching and learning, it is flexible, dynamic, and responsive to the changing needs of students. It is also open to constructive criticism and suggestions, and staff expect change. Norms of critical inquiry and continuous improvement prevail (Boyd, 1992). Findings from the case studies suggest that a climate conducive to change is developed gradually, as schools gain more and more experience with school improvement. Hence, fostering a climate conducive to change is seen as the last in the series of three stages of school improvement.

Southeast Elementary and Green Country, both historical sites, stand out as having a healthy climate for change. Both schools enjoy a family atmosphere or strong sense of community, and staff uniformly describe their working relationships as good. But the two schools have a norm of continuous improvement for different reasons, as will become clear.

Devoting Time for Staff to Plan and Solve Problems

Southeast Elementary's revised school schedule gave the school a regular forum for raising issues and solving problems together one afternoon every week. And once a month, this afternoon was devoted to Faculty Study, which typically involved a guest speaker addressing a topic of particular interest to the faculty. A good indication that Faculty Study promoted a broadly shared vision was the convergence of responses to questions at Southeast Elementary. Responses in individual face-to-face interviews tended to be the same from one person to the next, indicating that staff members communicated regularly and frequently.

After staff decided to implement CKC, they began using the Faculty Study forum for grade-group meetings. "We gave up our large study meeting on Thursday for grade meetings in order to work on Core." They worked to integrate CKC with the state's learner outcomes for each subject at each grade level. They drafted their own scope and sequence for all grades, K–6, entered the rough draft into the computer, and disseminated it to every teacher. In recent interviews, all teachers championed this change regarding Faculty Study because of what they had accomplished, but many also regretted the loss of time for overall sharing. Once staff become accustomed to faculty-wide collaboration, they remain cognizant of its benefits.

Once Southeast Elementary made the decision to revise the school schedule to allow time for Faculty Study, they persevered despite numerous objections to their idea. Being in a large school district, they encountered resistance from the bus transportation department, the after-school child care centers, the teachers' union, and the district office.

Schools not prepared to surmount these problems might pursue other models for blocking time so that teachers can work together. At Crossroads Middle School, teachers within a family shared a common preparation period. In addition to working together during this period, they might schedule meetings as a group with a parent whose child was having difficulty in school. At Delta High, the teacher coordinating implementation of the Ventures in Education program needed time to meet with Ventures teachers at the junior high. Therefore, the schedule was altered so that the VIE coordinator at the high school and all the Ventures teachers at the junior high would have the same planning period. Weekly meetings allowed the junior high teachers to be more actively involved in the program and to hone their planning skills. This strategy reportedly worked very well.

In another model, electives such as art, music, and physical education can be scheduled back-to-back to create a three-period block of planning time for teachers of the core subjects. An elementary school in South Texas that, like Border High, is participating in the Partnership Schools Initiative, has adopted this model.

Since Border High School had seven assistant principals, approximately 150 teachers, and roughly 60 paraprofessionals, it was a challenge to involve all staff in the process of revising the campus improvement plan. An in-service day was set aside each year for this purpose, and staff worked alternately in small and large groups to revise the plan in a single day.

Green Country recently adopted a school schedule similar to that of Southeast Elementary. Instead of Thursdays for early dismissal, however, Green Country chose to dismiss students early on Fridays. The teachers then met on Friday afternoons, beginning at 2:30 p.m. Since the school schedule was just revised early in the 1994–95 school year, the climate for change at Green Country is attributed to other factors that have been in place much longer. One of these factors is the systematic use of community input to guide the school.

Obtaining Community Input and Following Through

Green Country conducts surveys frequently to obtain community input on decisions. One particular survey, conducted every year in the spring, determines the community's priorities for the following school year. This survey provides a list of several possible improvements the school could pursue, and respondents are asked to rank the items on the list in order of priority. Staff make a point of following through on these surveys by making the improvements that ranked the highest in priority. These surveys, together with the school's track record of following through on the results, have created an optimal climate for change. Staff expect and accept change, hard work, and continuous improvement. Staff members who are not willing to put forth extra effort do not last long at this school. The same has been said of Southeast Elementary, although shared leadership and Faculty Study are the two forces that drive change at Southeast, rather than a dominant visionary leader or follow-through on community input.

Dealing with Resistance to Change

The personnel interviewed at Delta High attributed staff resistance to change more to age and years of experience than to any other factor. Comments seemed to reflect three underlying assumptions about the resistance of older teachers to change. One group simply stated that people who have been in the system for a while are "set in their ways," "don't care," or "don't see a need for change," but made no real attempt to understand the resistance. A second group perceived subtle role changes in the change process and suggested that older, more experienced teachers found it difficult to give up the role of authority figure. They noted that cooperative learning, for example, and other more constructivist instructional strategies strike at the very heart of the high school teacher's professional image as the authority on a particular subject. A third group of interviewees seemed to have respect for older, more experienced colleagues, reasoning that they had seen many educational innovations come and go. This third group thought these older, "wiser" ones had legitimate reasons for their resistance, such as a history of change being implemented with inadequate resources.

Delta High's former principal corroborated the testimony of this third group when he was asked how he dealt with detractors. "The temptation is to avoid them," he said, "but it is best to embrace them." Such a positive attitude toward resistance enhances the climate for change. While it is tempting to dismiss resistance as superficial, it is best to look more deeply for what might be legitimate objections to a change. If a school leader has a track record of allowing legitimate concerns to surface, he will likely be given the benefit of the doubt when he dismisses resistance only as a last resort.

Factors Facilitating or Impeding Change

Leadership is exercised within the context of a broad array of factors: the school facility and campus, instructional materials, training and experience of staff, and parent involvement or apathy, to name a few. Even the best leaders encounter impediments to change, and factors that facilitate change can be found at schools afflicted with serious problems such as poverty, violence, or low attendance. For example, Southeast Elementary and Road's End School each faced the threat of being closed, but both survived, in part because of staff commitment and community support. An important facet of leadership is sensing the impact that facilitating factors and impediments have on the school environment.

Organizational Rigidity

At the annual meeting of the sites in October 1994, the principal of one of the PSI schools commented on the difficulty of changing the way a school is organized. "Teachers are used to changing curriculum and instruction," she said, "but in my experience, organization is harder to change." Findings from the case studies seem to support her observation. Organizational lines were surprisingly powerful even at Road's End School, which is extremely small. Although the elementary and secondary grades sat at opposite ends of the same hallway, there were technically two schools according to the state department of education. Surprisingly, the two schools were distinct in the minds of staff as well. When an elementary teacher was asked "How do you share information with the high school?" the teacher replied, "There is some formal communication with our faculty meetings, but they are really kind of separate from us." A similar observation was made at Border High during an in-service day devoted to revising the campus improvement plan. Faculty members, who were assigned to groups in the morning in random fashion, interacted much more intently when regrouped by department in the afternoon. The mood in the room elevated to a distinctly higher level after the regrouping had occurred. After Crossroads Middle School implemented the Family Plan, some staff bemoaned the loss of communication within departments, as though the Family Plan had drawn organizational lines that prevented them from communicating with those teaching the same subjects.

At Crossroads Middle School, where the Family Plan was a completely new organizational structure, teachers who admitted to having been dead-set against the plan when it was first introduced to them, were later firmly committed to it. Grouping students into units of 100, and blocking classes within a family had the most significant impact. Under the family structure, teachers had more opportunities to develop good relationships with students; consequently they met both the affective and the instructional needs of their students more effectively. According to students and parents, the Family Plan has made a difference in teaching students how to cope with the pressures of adolescence and acclimating them to a school environment that is less self-contained than elementary school. In fact, they strongly recommend that the Family Plan continue and be extended to include the ninth graders, to ease their transition to high school.

The school building is being renovated in accordance with the Family Plan. Two new wings are under construction to accommodate two family units for each grade: sixth, seventh, and eighth. After four years of implementation, staff, parents, and students report that the Family Plan has been institutionalized, at least in structure if not in instructional approach.

Shortage of Time

Although the structure at Crossroads Middle School is designed to support interdisciplinary instruction, staff report that they only teach about one interdisciplinary unit per year. Minimal use of these units is attributed to the inordinate amount of time required to plan them. Consequently, staff who value this type of instruction have requested a second preparation period, to give them more planning time. At Border High, department heads, who had a second planning period for monitoring teachers in their departments, gave up this period to provide more tutoring to students. When, as a result, monitoring suffered, the school reinstated the second planning period. No issue stands out more at all the sites than the need for time to plan, collaborate, and solve problems, preferably together.

Administrative Support

It is possible that interdisciplinary instruction waned at Crossroads Middle School for a reason unrelated to the shortage of time: the visionary leader who had introduced the Family Plan was no longer with the district. Consequently, there was no one to exert pressure on staff to provide this type of instruction. Administrative support was lacking.

At one of the developmental sites, on the other hand, the external facilitator noted, in a recent interview, a significant increase in administrative support from fall to spring. Other school staff at the site also reported more visible administrative support. And they felt this increased support had influenced positively the attitudes of other staff members in the school district. This change was probably attributable to a combination of continued community support for the program and the obvious improvement in test scores. The external facilitator felt there was a new alliance between administrators and the teachers who were willing to risk change.

Administrative Communication

At the second developmental site, the principal had to deal with more than one mid-level manager at the central office, and he often encountered obstacles to change. One of these obstacles was the philosophy (held by central office managers) that all schools should be treated the same—that one school should not receive favorable treatment, even if the state allowed it. Fortunately, the external facilitator working with this school intervened at the central office, with some success. She saw a need, however, for more communication between the school principal and the central office, so that each would have a better understanding of what the other was trying to accomplish. The principal's problems dealing with several mid-level managers were consistent with the findings of a study of 19 elementary and secondary schools deemed successful with at-risk students. A direct line from the principal to the top authority in the central office, according to this study, "seemed to offer opportunity for faster and productive change" (Council of Chief State School Officers, 1990, p. 6).

Support Network

Both developmental sites benefited greatly by having an external facilitator and a network of other schools participating in a similar change initiative. The external facilitator arranged training or guest speakers, provided information and guidance, and promoted the exchange of ideas among the schools participating in the same initiative. The facilitator also assisted in detecting and trouble-shooting problems, intervening in some cases with the district office when progress stalled. Acting as a sounding board and reinforcing the principal for appropriate actions were other important functions for the external facilitator. Road's End School benefited from the assistance of a university professor who acted as an external facilitator. It also participated with 24 other schools in the Marva Collins training and implementation. Although Green Country did not have an external facilitator, it too enjoyed the benefits of a support network in which several nearby schools collaborated with a local university to implement Marva Collins's instructional strategies. These findings suggest that any school would derive both educational and inspirational value from a support network and interaction with other schools.

State-Level Support

In general the schools benefited considerably from support at the state level (not necessarily from the state education agency). In Arkansas, the national Ventures organization funded a state project director and provided financial and technical assistance to the schools (including Delta High) that had agreed to participate in the Arkansas VIE Project. At the same time that the Oklahoma system pressured Road's End School by listing it as a low-performing school, a foundation provided grants of $10,000 each to Road's End and 24 other "at risk" schools, to participate in the Marva Collins training. In Texas, the Partnership Schools Initiative gave schools enhanced flexibility to achieve set goals by streamlining the process for receiving waivers of state regulations. Assuming a supportive role, the Texas Education Agency funded a PSI coordinator in each region, provided approximately $7000 to each PSI school, and communicated regularly with the PSI coordinators across the state. Crossroads Middle School in New Mexico participated in Re:Learning and the Rockefeller Academy, both statewide initiatives. In every example, the school participated in the state-level effort on its own initiative.

Summary

The Leadership for Change Project examined the school improvement process by studying schools at different stages of school improvement, one in each of the five states in SEDL's region, plus an additional site in Oklahoma. Two of the schools were developmental sites; their school improvement efforts were in the early stages. The other sites were historical, with SEDL tracing their school improvements in retrospect while following the progress of ongoing efforts. At all five sites a racial or ethnic minority group made up the majority of students: two sites were primarily Hispanic, two were African-American, and two were American Indian. All had fairly large populations of low-income students. There was considerable variation across the schools, however, in the impetus for change, the focus or target of change, leaderships styles, and the factors facilitating or impeding change. Two of the schools faced the threat of closure. Two seized an opportunity available at the state level. At the other two, a visionary leader was the driving force for change. For some, a particular program was chosen for implementation while at others the target of change was attitudes, relationships, philosophy, or other aspects of school culture.

School improvement is seen as a progression of stages: getting started, maintaining momentum, and fostering a climate conducive to change. In reality, however, fostering a climate conducive to change cuts across all three stages; the climate for change is just more developed in the third stage. Leadership strategies in the earliest stage include learning from other schools, giving students first priority, deciding between partial and school-wide change, developing a common vision, and preparing staff for problems to come. School leaders should also take care not to raise false hopes when introducing a new program or practice.

To maintain momentum, leaders should provide both individual professional development and training to the faculty as a whole; but they should keep in mind that too much training can overwhelm staff. It is important to provide training materials that staff can review later, to refresh their understanding of the topics covered in the training. It is also important to monitor the use of what was learned to ensure continued implementation. Demonstrating unusual success with at-risk students inspires teachers to aim higher. Seeing students perform at much higher levels raises expectations not only for teachers but also for parents. Open communication is also key to maintaining momentum so that problems are allowed to surface.

The third stage is a climate conducive to change. At this stage, staff expect and accept change in order to meet the needs of students and their families in an ever-changing world. Two schools exemplified a norm of continuous improvement and an optimal climate for change, even though a prominent visionary leader led by example at one of the schools while leadership was shared at the other. Under the visionary leader, community input was stressed in the development of the school's annual improvement plans, and community members knew that their input was taken seriously because they had seen the school implement changes they suggested. Under shared leadership, the other school dismissed students early one day a week so that staff could collaborate in planning and solving problems. A community association took the place of a PTA or PTO, and members of the association were actively involved in decision making and school operations. At both schools, staff described a family atmosphere in which they worked well together and in which students were given priority.

According to the teacher-leader at the Arkansas site, the following 11 skills, traits, and actions were needed to implement change:

- Promoting a clear vision
- Taking initiative
- Building support with parents and the community
- Building a team spirit among the faculty
- Providing support and encouragement for other teachers
- Facilitating communication and reflection among the faculty
- Analyzing and making program adjustments as you go along
- Using alternative strategies such as a summer program to build skills
- Celebrating and recognizing program successes
- Persevering in the face of obstacles
- Exercising patience

Three attitudes toward resistance were delineated. People often attribute resistance to age and years of experience. Although it is tempting to dismiss resistance as being superficial, it is advisable to explore in depth the underlying reasons, in case they are legitimate. Entertaining objections to a change in an open way is part of fostering a climate conducive to change.

Impediments to change include the power of organizational lines and authority, and the shortage of time for planning and collaboration. Several levels in the chain of command between the principal and the superintendent can also impede change. A direct line of communication between the principal and superintendent, on the other hand, facilitates change. Administrative support and state-level support are other important factors that facilitate change. One of the most powerful factors promoting change is a support network, in which a school works with other schools on the same initiative. An external facilitator, with or without a support network, can also be greatly beneficial.

When the Leadership for Change research was midstream, staff formulated several working hypotheses that appeared to hold true as the studies progressed. These hypotheses are listed below.

1. Schools fall on a developmental continuum. The basic needs at Border High, where some staff did not even know each other, fall at one end of the continuum, while the excellent climate for change at Southeast Elementary and Green Country falls at the other.
2. More planning time for teachers during the school day greatly facilitates the school improvement process.
3. Regular planning meetings for all faculty are important for achieving a school-wide vision and a common understanding of developments at a school and their effects.
4. Monitoring and assessing progress is often left out.
4. Ongoing encouragement and support stimulates implementation.
5. Faculty at improving schools are characterized as a learning community.
6. School improvement requires students to change.

7. Leaders should not be too forceful nor too impatient to impose new ideas on a school community.

One can see parallels between the findings of this case study research and those of other studies. The strategies that leaders use should reflect what "followers" need in order to implement change. A list of requirements, adapted from Miles and Huberman (1984), is given below:

1. Administrative support
2. Understanding
3. Skills
4. Resources
5. Time
6. Commitment
7. Problem-solving

The challenge for leaders, then, is to ensure that these requirements are met so that adult personnel have what they need to implement a new practice intended to improve schooling. Leaders must facilitate change, not merely direct it. Mandates may show administrative support and clarify expectations, but they go awry for lack of attention to the other requirements. Moreover, there is more to support than mere expectations. Support includes interpersonal contact, guidance, coaching, technical assistance, feedback, reinforcement, and celebration.

The study's design has the advantage that the struggles of the developmental sites can be compared with the triumphs of the historical sites. The achievements of the historical sites give one hope that the developmental sites will overcome their difficulties, for their struggles are no more severe than those which the historical sites previously faced. At the same time, one can appreciate the obstacles encountered by the historical sites along their journey to becoming continuously improving schools. Their accomplishments are an inspiration for any school that might be launching a renewal effort.

Appendix A

Basic Characteristics of the Sites

Regarding ethnicity, all of the site schools had mainly minority students. At the New Mexico and Texas sites, the majority of students were Hispanic; at the Arkansas and Louisiana sites, the majority were African-American. Since Oklahoma had the highest number of American Indians in the nation and Native Americans were the largest minority group in the state, a school was selected in Oklahoma that had a majority of Native American students. All sites had high proportions of low-income students as well, as determined by participation in the free/reduced lunch program. The Arkansas site, located in the Mississippi Delta, and the Texas site, located in the Lower Rio Grande Valley, were in some of the poorest counties in the entire country.

The Louisiana site was in the largest district; the districts for New Mexico and Texas were of moderate size; and the Arkansas and Oklahoma sites were in small, rural districts. The Oklahoma site was a dependent school; that is, it graduates attended high school in another district. The Texas school had a large, overcrowded campus, and a student body that varied in size depending upon whether its migrant students were present or not. Texas was the only site with a significant number of migrant students.

At the Louisiana site, the student body was mostly Anglo-American until the school became a magnet school in 1976 to attract more students. As the student population grew, it changed to a more balanced mix of African-Americans and Anglo-Americans, and the number of Hispanic students grew as well. Except at this one site, significant demographic shifts were not noted at the sites.

Table 5

Basic Characteristics of the Research Sites

	Setting	Grades Served	Predominant Minority	Approximate Number of Students
Arkansas	Rural	10–12	African-American	470
Louisiana	Metropolitan	Pre-K–6	African-American	400
New Mexico	Urban	6–8	Hispanic	600
Oklahoma	Rural	Pre-K-8	American Indian	540
Texas	Urban	9–12	Hispanic	2,500–2,800

Appendix B

Getting the Sites Together

SEDL organized five meetings for the research sites, and there up to seven representatives from each site at these meetings. These meetings gave the school teams the opportunity to learn from each other and to share their experiences with school improvement. The first meeting was held in June 1992 at SEDL's corporate headquarters in Austin. Subsequent meetings were rotated among the schools; the schools took turns hosting the meetings, so they could visit each other's campuses. At each meeting, guest speakers explored a specific topic in depth.

At the first meeting the representatives from each school were given 30 minutes to describe their school using slides, pictures, and handouts—even a quilt—to convey what the school was like. The agenda included time to network so that the school teams could get to know each other as well as time to discuss the design and progress of the case studies. The guest speakers were Bob Blum from the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory and Dick Corbett from Research for Better Schools, the REL in Philadelphia. Dr. Blum and Dr. Corbett facilitated a discussion around Covey's principle: Begin with the end in mind. Participants were given time to meet alternately in small groups and as a whole group to envision the "end" outcomes they would want for their students when they become the adults of tomorrow.

For the second meeting in October 1993, the schools chose to visit "Southeast Elementary" school in Louisiana. Participants witnessed Morning Meeting and Faculty Study, which were key to the school's culture of caring and respect and which fostered a learning community that honored dissent. Because this school was the first in New Orleans to implement a peer mediation program at the elementary level, guest speakers were invited to talk about the development and implementation of the peer mediation program. On the meeting's second day, SEDL staff presented the most important findings from the case studies thus far and from the three literature syntheses that they had completed that year.

The third meeting in October 1994 was located in South Texas, near the border between the United States and Mexico. The meeting began with a tour of "Border High." Because of this school's participation in the state's Partnership Schools Initiative (PSI), the entire first day of the meeting focused on this initiative. The PSI director from the Texas Education Agency provided a statewide perspective and touched on what a few of the PSI schools throughout the state were doing to improve student performance. Then three PSI schools from Border High's region described their school improvement efforts in depth. Finally, the PSI coordinator from the regional education service center, who acted as an external facilitator for these PSI schools, summarized her observations of the school improvement process.

"Green Country School" in Oklahoma hosted the fourth meeting, in April 1995. The school teams met in Tulsa to have dinner together and share the progress of their schools. The next day began with a bus trip to Tahlequah to visit the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma and to meet with the staff of the Cherokee Nation's education department. Then at Green Country School, participants heard an overview of the history of improvements at the school, and toured the school, visiting classrooms and seeing the school's many facilities. At lunch, school staff and members of the community served a meal of traditional Indian dishes and explained many aspects of their culture. Wilma Mankiller, who was Chief of the Cherokee Nation at the time and has close ties to the school, spoke during the luncheon about a variety of topics. A major portion of the afternoon was devoted to a grant-writing workshop for the participants, since Green Country School has an impressive ability to obtain grants to supplement its meager tax base.

The next morning participants were allowed some unstructured time to meet in role-alike groups—principals in one group, teachers in another, etc. This unstructured meeting time was arranged because of comments on previous meeting evaluations that participants wanted more time for sharing. Ms. Sandy Garrett, State Superintendent for the Oklahoma State Department of Education, presented an overview of education in the state, and Dr. Kent Lashley, Endowed Chair at Northeastern State University in Tahlequah, described the philosophy behind Great Expectations, a program that Green Country and other nearby schools implemented under the direction of NSU.

Finally, Crossroads Middle School was the host for the last meeting of the school teams in New Mexico in October 1995. Like the meeting at Green Country, this meeting started with a dinner together and progress reports from each school, as well as a visit the next morning to the school. After an overview of the school, participants toured the school and saw how it had been remodeled around the Family Plan. After lunch, classroom visits showed how special education students had been mainstreamed so that they followed the Family Plan just like the other students. The visit to the school ended with Young Astronauts, an after-school activity, followed by a visit to Armand Hammer World College, which is a particularly unique aspect of the local community because only six such world colleges exist in all the world. College staff presented participants with information about the role of the world college in promoting peace here and abroad, while Crossroads Middle School staff and gang members described how mediation had created a more peaceful and orderly environment locally at the school.

Without a shadow of a doubt, these five meetings were, for the schools, the most valuable aspect of serving as sites in the case studies. Getting the schools together enabled them to learn from each other. It expanded their thinking about teaching and school environment, and appeared to motivate and energize them. Toward the end of the study period, SEDL staff learned that these meetings even had a positive impact beyond the research sites themselves. When Greenwood Elementary School (the school's real name) in Oklahoma heard from staff at Green Country School that one of the PSI schools in Texas had a unique school schedule that allowed time for collaboration among teachers, Greenwood Elementary contacted the PSI school and implemented the same schedule.

Considering the benefits of getting schools together, it is a wonder that more resources are not devoted to making this possible for schools across the country.

Appendix C

Publications of the Leadership for Change Project

Publications about the Research Sites in the Series Issues...about Change

Boyd, V. and Fitzgibbon, K. (1993). Superintendents of small districts and school improvement: Planning, providing resources and professional development. *Issues...about Change*, 3(1). Austin, TX: Southwest Educational Development Laboratory.

Fuentes, N., Crum, G. J., and Garcia, E Jr. (1994). Changing mental frameworks: One high school's success through a triad partnership. *Issues...about Change*, 3(2). Austin, TX: Southwest Educational Development Laboratory.

Boyd, V. and Hord, S. M. (1994). Schools as learning communities. *Issues...about Change*, 4(1). Austin, TX: Southwest Educational Development Laboratory.

Boyd, V. and McGree, K. M. (1995). Leading change from the classroom: Teachers as leaders. *Issues...about Change*, 4(4). Austin, TX: Southwest Educational Development Laboratory.

Fuentes, N. (1995). Maryetta School: The center of a rural community. *Issues...about Change*, 5(1). Austin, TX: Southwest Educational Development Laboratory.

Castro, A. (1995). Safe schools: Lessons from the sites. *Issues...about Change*, 5(2). Austin, TX: Southwest Educational Development Laboratory.

Hord, S. M. (1995). Students: How they view learning and their schools. *Issues...about Change*, 5(3). Austin, TX: Southwest Educational Development Laboratory.

Guerra, P. (1995) Confronting and managing culture in a changing environment. *Issues...about Change*, 5(4). Austin, TX: Southwest Educational Development Laboratory.

Other Publications or Reports about the Research Sites

Boyd, V. and Hord, S.M. (1994). Principals and the new paradigm: Schools as learning communities. Paper presented at the American Educational Research Association conference, New Orleans, Louisiana.

Boyd, V. and Hord, S.M. (1995). Creating a context for change. *Waves of Learning*, Issue II. Austin, Texas: Texas Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development and Texas Professors of Educational Administration.

Castro, A. (1995). Creating safe schools. *INSIGHT*, 9(2), Austin, Texas: Texas Association of School Administrators.

Castro, A. (Fall 1995). Violence prevention starts with young children. *Texas Study of Secondary Education*, 5(1). Austin, Texas: Texas Association of Secondary School Principals.

Fuentes, N. (November 1992). *Interim Report: Leadership for Change Project*. Austin, TX: Southwest Educational Development Laboratory.

Fuentes, N. (December 1993). *Lessons from Five Case Studies*. Interim report for the Leadership for Change Project. Austin, TX: Southwest Educational Development Laboratory.

Fuentes, N. (November, 1994). *Lessons on Implementation from Six Schools in the Southwest*. Austin, TX: Southwest Educational Development Laboratory.

Hord, S.M. (1995). Professional development fuels a culture of continuous improvement. *Journal of Staff Development*, 16(1), 10–15.

To weave a stronger cloth...Restructuring schools to build strength in diversity. *SEDLetter*, 5(5), November 1992–January 1993.

Mayer, M. (June–August, 1995). Safety first: A New Mexico middle school safeguards students by diffusing clique rivalries. *SEDLetter*, 8(2). Austin, TX: Southwest Educational Development Laboratory.

Submissions to Journals

Castro, A. (1995). Creating safe schools: Prekindergarten through grade 12. Submitted for publication in *Texas Lone Star*. Austin, Texas: Texas Association of School Boards.

Notes

The publications are listed in chronological order. The two publications in *SEDLetter* were about the Louisiana and New Mexico sites, respectively, but not produced by Leadership for Change Project staff.

Appendix D

Summary of the Case Study Methodology

The Leadership for Change Project focused on implementation, leadership strategies for successful implementation, and factors that facilitated or impeded school improvement. SEDL selected a school in each one of its five states for parallel case studies of school improvement at different stages. The developmental sites were two high schools just initiating a major school improvement effort, making it possible to examine their efforts as they unfolded. The other three schools were historical sites. SEDL traced their experiences with the improvement process in retrospect. All of the studies traced the development, implementation, and progress of ongoing improvements as they unfolded over time.

Research Questions

Together the case studies had a two-fold purpose: (1) to discover how innovative leaders successfully implemented changes intended to have a positive impact on at-risk students; and (2) to investigate system contextual factors that facilitated or impeded the implementation of changes (see the glossary of terms). The basic research questions formulated at the beginning of the project were:

1. What are the demographic characteristics of each site at the beginning of the study?
2. What is the school's history of change and improvement, i.e., the school improvements that have been implemented or are underway? What changes or improvements were specifically aimed at helping at-risk students?
3. What are the effective and ineffective strategies that leaders at each site use to develop, implement, and continue school improvements?
4. What contextual factors appear to facilitate or impede school improvements for at-risk students?

Rationale for the Case Study Approach

According to Yin (1984), a case study is an empirical inquiry that:

- investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context; when
- the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident; and
- in which multiple sources of evidence are used.

Case study methods are appropriate for the study of leadership strategies because leaders' effectiveness is reflected by their influence on other people within a specific context. Leaders must understand the local context. Deal and Nutt (1979) described conflicts and surprises that developed in the Experimental Schools program. "An important lesson to be gleaned," they wrote, "is that the history of a school district and the existing relationships among teachers, administrators, and parents or local residents—often subtle and implicit—can greatly influence how a new project is initially received. If administrators don't

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assess the history, existing understandings, and relationships before initiating change, they may be caught off guard by the reaction." Case study methods are appropriate for examining leadership in local and real-world contexts.

Another strength of a case study is that the psychological, social, and cultural dynamics of a school can be described from the perspective of those who are part of the school. Since leaders' effectiveness is reflected by their influence on other people, critical perceptual data are best obtained through case study rather than survey methods. At three of the schools selected for the Leadership for Change Project, most of the students and staff belonged to a minority group. The other selected schools had a large percentage of students and staff who belonged to a minority group, even though they did not constitute a majority. Thus, the sites as a group afforded a unique opportunity to study perceptions of leaders and their effectiveness in implementing change from different cultural perspectives.

Site Selection Criteria

SEDL selected a school in each of the five states in its region: Arkansas, Louisiana, New Mexico, Oklahoma, and Texas. Several criteria guided the selection of sites. Variety among sites was important, so both rural and urban sites were selected, and elementary, middle, and secondary schools were all included in the study. All sites had the following important characteristics:

- high population of minority and low-income students
- innovative leadership
- school improvement

Large Population of Minority and Low-income Students

Socioeconomic indicators that are statistically correlated with dropping out of school were used to identify schools with high populations of at-risk students. Since data were readily available on income and minority status, which are correlated with dropout rates, these data were used in site selection. All six sites had large populations of low-income students, and a minority group constituted the majority at five of the schools. At the Arkansas and Louisiana sites, the majority of students were African-American; at the New Mexico and Texas sites, the majority was Hispanic; and at the Oklahoma site, the majority was American Indian. At the original Oklahoma site, 37 percent of the students were American Indian.

Initially performance-based indicators such as actual dropout rates might seem preferable to socioeconomic indicators. The paradox associated with performance-based indicators, however, is that they may not distinguish between schools that have low populations of at-risk students and schools that are effective with at-risk students. The dropout rate, for example, may be low because the problems that tend to cause students to drop out were simply not present or because a school was effective at ameliorating these problems. Socioeconomic indicators were used in site selection to avoid this paradox.

Innovative Leadership

By consulting educators in key positions in each state for their recommendations, SEDL staff identified school leaders who had an established reputation for being innovative and effective in implementing changes. The changes that had been planned or implemented at the sites showed promise for having a positive impact on at-risk students, based on research or theoretical grounds.

School Improvement

The study called for two types of sites: developmental sites and historical sites. To qualify as a developmental site, a school had to be launching an improvement initiative. Whether a school was exemplary or needed much improvement was not as important as whether it was initiating a major school improvement effort. Historical sites, on the other hand, had to have a history of school-wide improvement.

SITE SELECTION

The Oklahoma site that was initially selected was an example of a school that needed much improvement. A Pre-K–12 school in the southeast quadrant of the state, the school had launched an improvement initiative in 1990 because it had been put on the state's list of "low performing" schools. After SEDL's initial data collection visit in March 1992, the school board decided not to renew its contracts with the superintendent, who was also the elementary school's principal, and with the high school principal. A first-grade teacher with far more experience than any other elementary teacher also left the school. This presented a dilemma for SEDL, because the focus of the study was leadership, and the school staff had affirmed during the March interviews that they perceived the superintendent to be indeed a good leader who had instituted several significant changes at the school in the two years that he had been superintendent there. SEDL staff kept in touch with him in case he was offered a leadership position elsewhere in Oklahoma and the study could continue at his new location. This did not occur, however, so eventually a second site was identified, and the study in Oklahoma began anew with a Pre-K–8 school that had a long history of school improvement. Unless otherwise specified, "Oklahoma site" and "second Oklahoma site" refer to this latter school, while "original Oklahoma site" refers to the Pre-K–12 school that was selected initially.

The table below provides essentially a snapshot of the six schools included in this multi-site study.

Snapshot

	Setting	Grades Served	Predominant Minority Group	Approximate No. of Students
Arkansas	Rural	10–12	African-American	470
Louisiana	Metropolitan	Pre-K–6	African-American	400
New Mexico	Urban	6–8	Hispanic	600
Oklahoma	Rural	Pre-K–8	American Indian	540
Oklahoma	Rural	Pre-K–12	American Indian	122
Texas	Urban	9–12	Hispanic	2,500–2,800

The high schools in Arkansas and Texas were the developmental sites, while the other schools were historical sites. The Louisiana and Oklahoma schools had a history of school improvement dating back more than a decade, and the climate for change at these two schools appeared to be excellent. The middle school in New Mexico was also designated as a historical site. However, its history of change dated back only to the 1990–91 school year, and implementation of the Family Plan was still evolving when the study began. Moreover, certain members of the faculty still resisted change, indicating that the school's climate for change was not so well developed as that of the Louisiana and Oklahoma schools. Furthermore, the resignation in November 1992 of the superintendent who had been the impetus for change put the status of the change in limbo. Thus, in reality, the middle school fell in the middle, somewhere in between the developmental sites and the other two historical sites. The same was true of the original Oklahoma site.

Site Research Teams

Each school site was asked to designate five people to serve on a site research team. The composition of each team, jointly determined by SEDL staff and the school site, included the principal as well as teachers who were informal leaders in the school. Some of the site research teams included a person from outside the school. For Arkansas, a developmental site, the site research team included the Arkansas Project Director for Ventures in Education (VIE). For Texas, also a developmental site, the team included a representative from the Region One Education Service Center (ESC). This representative served as the ESC's liaison to the five schools in Region One, including the site school, that were participating in the Partnership Schools Initiative. For the Louisiana site, the team included a person whose position changed during the study period. Working first at a regional service center that suffered a loss of funding, she then took a position at a local university, coordinating the efforts of local schools participating in a particular initiative.

It was important that the site research teams have an understanding of and interest in the case study of the school, because the site research team members carried out the following tasks:

(1) becoming familiar with the case study's purpose and research questions
(2) serving as participatory observers or "change watchers," noting what happened at the school as innovations were developed and implemented
(3) participating in telephone interviews between site visits
(4) helping to make arrangements for SEDL site visits
(5) attending the annual meetings of the site research teams

In addition, each school sent at least one person to make a presentation about the school at the final cadre meeting in Year 5 (FY95).

Timeline of School Improvement

The timeline for school improvement was conceptualized as consisting of the following three phases:

- adoption of a school-wide improvement effort
- implementation of the improvement

- continuation of the practice that was implemented.

Adoption

Adoption begins with an impetus for change, which might be a problem, an opportunity, a mandate, or an individual's initiative. A committee might be formed to address particular issues. Adoption might include assessment, problem-solving, planning, awareness training, and the writing of a plan that states the goals, objectives, assigned responsibilities, and time-frames of an improvement effort. Adoption ends with a decision to go forward with a particular change, whether it be a new program, instructional practice, organizational structure, or change in school culture.

Implementation

Implementation of an improvement effort would generally include the steps taken to carry out the plan, such as training staff, trying new approaches, and making adjustments to the plan based on problems encountered.

Continuation

Once a new practice has been implemented, a school may or may not institutionalize the new practice into curriculum or policy, formally or informally. Continuation refers to the phase following implementation.

Data Collection

Data sources for the study included face-to-face interviews and observations during site visits; telephone interviews with site research teams between site visits; school records and documents; statewide reports; and written questionnaires, as needed.

Face-to-face interviews were conducted during site visits, to gather perceptual data from a wide variety of people associated with each school. People interviewed included superintendents, principals, teachers, counselors, support staff, and parent leaders. At the Arkansas and New Mexico sites, students were also interviewed. An interview with one student at the Texas site—the student body president—was videotaped. It might also be mentioned that students were interviewed at the Louisiana and Texas sites for purposes of the Restructuring Collaborative, an effort different from the Leadership for Change Project. At the Oklahoma site, teacher assistants and one board member were interviewed. At the Louisiana site, the school secretary was interviewed.

Each interview was recorded on audio or video tape only if the interviewee granted permission. If not, the interviewer took notes. Understandably, interviewees who did not grant permission tended to be at the developmental sites. Although uncomfortable with the idea of being taped, those who declined to be taped appeared to answer the researcher's questions truthfully, and were generally cooperative during the interview. Except for times when the interviewee was pressed for time because of classes or other commitments, it was necessary only once to abort an interview. The individual in this case was extremely uncomfortable being interviewed, and a room with enough privacy to suit both the interviewer and the interviewee was not available. A few interviews were not recorded because of equipment problems. Interviews were videotaped during the last year of the study only.

Recordings were used for several reasons: (1) so the interviewer could concentrate on listening rather than on taking notes; (2) so that answers could be verified later, when the tapes were reviewed; and (3) so that other SEDL staff could check the validity of the conclusions that were later drawn from the interviews. This type of peer examination enhanced the credibility of the research. Resources did not permit the transcription of all audiotaped interviews. However, an effort was made to ensure that there were transcriptions of interviews with individuals from all role-alike groups: superintendents, principals, teachers, parents, and, where applicable, students and support staff.

SEDL staff visited each site for the first time between January and May of 1992, except that the first visit to the second Oklahoma site occurred in September 1992. Following this first phase of visits, site visits occurred at least twice—generally once in the fall and again in the spring—during each school year. On visits subsequent to the first visit, an effort was made to interview a combination of people who had been interviewed before, and people who were being interviewed for the first time. This applied especially to the Texas site, which had by far the largest number of staff. The last wave of data collection visits occurred in the early months of 1995. The very last site visit was a trip in April to observe the Louisiana site during the tenure of an acting principal.

With five states in SEDL's region and five staff members originally assigned to the Leadership for Change Project, the project director designated each staff member to serve as the primary liaison for a particular state. However, usually two, and sometimes three, SEDL staff members went on each site visit so that they could conduct as many interviews as possible and compare their observations. In addition to face-to-face interviews during site visits, the site liaison conducted telephone interviews, as needed, between visits.

It is acknowledged that the leaders of each school site were probably over-represented on the site research teams. At first, more leaders than non-leaders were interviewed to determine their plans and direction for the school. After the first couple of site visits, however, interviews with leaders and non-leaders were more balanced. The interviews with both leaders and non-leaders were important for gauging the effectiveness of the leaders' actions from the point of view of all involved with the change.

SEDL staff reviewed official documents and records, campus brochures, and reports (including state-wide reports) on an ongoing basis. Meeting minutes and written plans, if they existed, were additional sources of information on developments at a site.

Research Question 1: What were the demographic characteristics of each site at the beginning of the study?

For information on the school facility, number of students in each grade, demographics of students and staff, and other main characteristics of the sites, SEDL developed the "Basic School Profile" and asked each school to complete it. Observations of the site and statewide reports supplemented the information on the school profile. Of interest were such items as the size of the district, its setting (urban or rural), the number of students and staff at the school, an ethnic breakdown of students and staff, and the socioeconomic status of students (measured by participation in the free and reduced-price lunch program). District-wide programs, local campus programs, and ways that parents or volunteers were involved with the school were also listed on the basic profile. In addition, each member of the school staff who was interviewed was asked to complete a "Personal Background Summary" that provided information on their education, tenure, experience, and special interests.

Research Question 2: What was each school's history of change and improvement? What changes were specifically aimed at helping at-risk students?

During the initial face-to-face interviews at each site, researchers used a detailed interview protocol with specific questions. To begin with, researchers were interested in the school's history of change and improvement—improvements that had already been implemented or were underway. Some key questions on this protocol concerning the school's history of change were the following:

- For each major effort made at your school during the last five years, please describe the effort. What was the impetus or reasons for the effort, what were the goals and objectives, how did things change, and what were the effects of the change?
- What changes, if any, were specifically aimed at helping at-risk students?

From responses to these questions, SEDL staff identified the leaders at each school and learned of a wide variety of changes:

- Changes in philosophy, goals, or objectives
- Organizational, administrative, or governance changes
- New facilities or new programs
- Instructional or curricular changes
- Extracurricular changes
- Changes in expectations, relationships, or other aspects of school culture
- Changes in the way parents or community members were involved with the school

Other questions concerning changes were included near the end of the protocol, because it was expected that such changes might occur secondarily, as a result of other changes, rather than because the school had deliberately set about to effect those changes. Two such questions were:

- While improvements were being planned or implemented, were there changes in your skills, knowledge, or thinking about learning, about teaching, or about other school functions?
- Have there been changes in your interactions or relationships with students or with the other adults in the school?

The question of history obviously applied more to the historical sites than to the developmental sites, but even the developmental sites had some history, since none of the schools were new. School documents provided some information on the history of change and improvement. But the primary source of this information was interviews, especially with administrators, teachers, or parents who had been with the school the longest. These individuals' experiences with the school, and their perceptions of the school both before and after the implementation of a change, provided important insights into the context for the ongoing improvements that were followed throughout the study.

Research Question 3: What were the effective and ineffective strategies that leaders at each site used to develop, implement, and continue school improvements?

The most important questions on the initial, detailed protocol addressed directly or indirectly the strategies used by the school leaders to effect change and the factors that appeared to facilitate or impede change. Below is a sampling of these questions:

- What approaches do you use to share and distribute information, formally or informally?
- What strategies have you or other people used successfully to plan or implement improvements for your school?
- What strategies appear to be unsuccessful?
- What staff development activities have you participated in this school year? Which were worthwhile and which, not so worthwhile?

In subsequent interviews, the questions on the interview protocol were more open-ended, allowing the interviewees to provide unique insights regarding goals, past and current school improvement efforts, leadership strategies, and factors facilitating or impeding change. Perceptual data were collected to determine how the people at each school perceived their school, its students, and the community. Staff were queried about how decisions were made at the school, where new ideas came from, and what procedures, if any, they had to follow before they could try something new or take a risk. Given that leadership was defined as a process by which an individual or team induces a group to pursue objectives, the perceptions of that group and its leaders were critical and could only be gleaned from interviews. Review of school documents and observations provided some information on school improvement activities, but interviews were the primary source of information.

An examination of implementation can be compared to a process evaluation that determines how well the staff carried out their plan and to what extent the new program or practice matched the vision that school leaders had for it. For a process evaluation of the Family Plan at the New Mexico site, staff used the innovation configuration matrix (Hall and Loucks, 1981; Hord, Rutherford, Huling-Austin, and Hall, 1987) to identify the components of the Family Plan and to assess to what degree the components were in place. Through interviews with the school leaders, the Family Plan was broken into components, and the components were identified as either critical or not critical. The list of components represented the improvement in clear, operational terms. The importance of the components (whether they were critical or not) determined which combinations or configurations of components were ideal, acceptable, or unacceptable.

School leaders at the New Mexico site identified the following components of the Family Plan:

- Families of four to six teachers sharing approximately 80 to 100 students
- Heterogeneous grouping within the classes
- Cooperative learning as an instructional method
- Interdisciplinary instructional units developed by the teachers in a Family
- A common preparation period for the teachers in each Family to discuss instruction, curriculum, or problems of a particular student

Some components, such as heterogeneous grouping, fell under the control of the principal and counselors, and applied to the school as a whole. Other components, such as interdisciplinary instruction, were more within the control of Family teams and individual teachers. Through interviews with staff in each Family unit, SEDL determined the use or nonuse of these components, which constituted the innovation configuration for that Family. As expected, the teams varied considerably with respect to these latter components.

The New Mexico site was ideal for this type of analysis because implementation was well underway at the time of the analysis, and the Family Plan had distinct components. Although SEDL staff had had intentions of conducting process evaluations at the other sites, either it seemed much too early or the changes seemed too numerous or too diffuse to analyze the changes in that manner. Therefore, an innovation configuration matrix was not developed for the other sites.

Once a new practice had been implemented, a school may or may not have integrated the new practice formally into its school policies or operations. In some cases, school documents or observations of a school indicated that a new practice had been institutionalized formally, while in other cases interviews revealed whether or not a new practice actually had been institutionalized. The issue of institutionalization was especially prominent at the New Mexico site.

Research Question 4: What contextual factors appeared to facilitate or imped school improvements for at-risk students?

Despite the reference to at-risk students, the focus of this question is the effect of school context on the progress of improvement efforts. Every school encounters factors that facilitate or impede its efforts to improve. The case studies focused on the physical facility, financial and material resources, the school culture, relationships with parents and community members, and policies and regulations. Of particular interest were the school's norms with regard to working collaboratively, sharing power and decision-making, taking risks, dealing with impediments, and being open to criticism and continuous improvement. Examples of questions that touched on these issues appear below.

- Describe a typical day in this school.
- What laws, regulations, or other policies seem to facilitate or impede efforts to improve your school?
- What attitudes or beliefs seem to facilitate or impede efforts to improve your school?
- What other factors, if any, seem to facilitate or impede efforts to improve your school?

- Describe communication channels here among staff, with parents, and with students. Would you say that communication has improved, stayed about the same, or declined during this school year?
- How do decisions get made in the school? Have you observed any changes this school year in the way decision are made?
- Have there been some new ideas you have tried this year?
- If you have a new idea, do you feel free to try the idea out on your own or must it be approved before trying it out?
- If you have a problem, what is the process you follow to resolve it?
- What opportunities have you had for working together with others on school-related activities? What barriers exist against working together?

An answer to the first question given by a teacher at the Texas site illustrates how these questions probed for the effect of school context. After describing the start of a typical day, her morning classes, the lunch period, and her afternoon classes, the teacher mentioned that the school was required to turn off the air conditioning when school was dismissed. Anyone familiar with the climate in south Texas would appreciate the negative impact of this requirement, which discourages staff from working after school because temperatures are unbearably hot for much of the year. In this case, an impediment was identified, but both impediments and factors that facilitated school improvement surfaced in the interviewees' answers to questions designed to assess the effects of school context.

Supplementary Sources of Information

The findings from the case studies were informed by other sources of information. Some information was gleaned from the five meetings of the site research teams, which occurred in June 1992, October 1993, October 1994, April 1995, and October 1995 (see *Getting the Sites Together* elsewhere in this Appendix for details of these meetings).

In 1992 the Leadership for Change Project staff completed the following three literature reviews:

- *Facilitative Leadership: The Imperative for Change*
- *School Context: Bridge or Barrier to Change?*
- *Leadership Characteristics that Facilitate School Change*

The first synthesis identified six basic leadership strategies related to vision, resources, professional development, monitoring, continuous assistance, and the capacity to change. The second synthesis developed the concept of a context conducive to change and distinguished between the ecology of a school and its culture. *Ecology* consists of the school's physical or organizational arrangements, policies, resources, and demographic shifts, while *culture* refers to its attitudes and beliefs, norms, and relationships. The third synthesis delineated six characteristics of leaders who facilitate school improvement: giving priority to students, communicating well, valuing the school's human resources, taking risks, being proactive, and having vision. The key concepts in these three syntheses as well as the meetings with the site research teams influenced the analysis of data from the case studies.

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Data Analysis

Recordings and transcriptions made it possible for other SEDL staff to check the validity of the conclusions drawn from the interviews. This type of peer examination enhanced the credibility of the research. In the process of reviewing transcriptions of the audiotaped interviews and, in some cases, the audiotapes themselves, specific themes began to emerge for each unique site. These themes were verified through the method of triangulation (Miles and Huberman, 1984), in which multiple perceptions from different sources were compared. Commonalities in the perceptions of different people at a particular site and similarities among SEDL staff in their perceptions of that site were noted.

Analysis began by first reviewing each case study separately, and then by conducting a cross-case analysis. It must be stressed that generalities and differences between the sites were equally important. One of the strengths of multiple case studies is that they allow researchers to see more clearly what seems to be the same regardless of context, and what seems to be affected by context. Thus, in the cross-case analysis, it was important to attend not only to generalities among the cases, but also to differences. First analyzing each case individually on particular factors and then comparing the cases constitutes a powerful analytic approach for questioning and then refining generalities.

In the early stages of the case studies, when not all data had been collected, SEDL's state liaisons used various ways to organize the data. One researcher, for example, compiled all the answers to a particular question from the people at a particular site. Other SEDL staff used the constant comparative method (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Lincoln and Guba, 1985). In accordance with this method, data were reviewed and "unitized"—the text of the interview transcriptions was cut into parts that included information about a particular topic. The first piece of topical text was placed in a "stack." The next piece of text was compared to the first; if its focus was the same as the first, it was placed on that stack. If the focus was different, it was the start of a new stack indicating a new topic. All text units were reviewed and placed on stacks as their topics were compared. Once data were organized into topics, regardless of the method, responses were reviewed for similarities, contrasts, and patterns.

After nearly all the data had been collected, they were coded using the software program HyperResearch. SEDL staff had started with a software package called NUDIST (Non-numerical Unstructured Data Indexing, Searching, and Theorizing) but switched to HyperResearch because of memory limitations, ease of coding, and user preferences. After coding, it was a simple matter to print HyperResearch reports for each site that were organized by topics or themes.

The findings reflected whatever the staff at the sites tended to emphasize at the different schools, and the relative emphasis on a given topic varied among the schools. Staff at one school, for example, might have talked about learning styles much more often than staff at another school. In other words, learning styles emerged as a *theme* at the first school but not at the second school. The findings, then, were articulated in terms of themes or topics that staff at the sites emphasized in the interviews. Perceptual data on leadership and the effectiveness of the strategies leaders used were documented within the unique context of each site as well as compared among the sites. Both effective and ineffective leadership strategies were identified.

Reports

As a rule, perceptual data were included in a report only if at least two people had conveyed the same perception, but occasionally an opinion was cited with the clarification that the opinion had been expressed by only one person. SEDL staff prepared several reports about each site:

(1) a "state-of-the-school" report that was included in the first *Interim Report*, a monograph that summarized the status of the research at the end of FY92;
(2) a 1993–94 "end-of-year" report used to prepare a second interim report *Lessons from Five Case Studies*, which reported intermediate findings as of the end of FY93;
(3) at least one, and sometimes two, publications for the series *Issues...about Change*.

Each of these reports was sent while still in draft form to the site research team members for their review and comment on the accuracy of facts in the report. These member checks, which are fairly standard in case study designs, enhanced the trustworthiness of the research findings. Some of the *Issues...about Change* papers were actually co-authored by site personnel.

The second interim report on the research, *Lessons from Five Case Studies*, documented leadership strategies used at the sites within the framework of the six broad strategies identified by Hord in her 1992 synthesis *Facilitative Leadership: The Imperative for Change*. These six strategies were:

- Develop and articulate a vision
- Plan and provide resources
- Invest in training and professional development
- Assess and monitor progress
- Provide continuous assistance
- Create a context conducive to change

Under each of these broad strategies, specific actions taken by one or more of the sites to effect change were noted in the report. So, for example, some of the sites had visited other schools to develop a vision of the intended change. One site had set aside Thursday afternoon of every week for professional development and school improvement. The principals at a couple of the sites maintained an "open door," which helped to create a context conducive to change. Concrete steps or measures such as these were described in considerable detail, in case the reader might want to know how to operationalize the six broad strategies.

The third interim report *Lessons on Implementation from Six Schools in the Southwest* reported the findings from all six sites, including the original Oklahoma site, within the framework of three stages of school improvement: (1) getting started, (2) maintaining momentum, and (3) fostering a climate conducive to change. The last section of this report covered factors facilitating or impeding change. This framework was also used in the preparation of this final report.

Limitations of Study

Qualitative methodology refers to those research strategies which allow the researcher to obtain firsthand knowledge about the research subject. Qualitative methodology allows the researcher to "get close to the data," thereby developing the analytical, conceptual, and categorical components of explanation from the data itself—rather than from "preconceived, rigidly structured, and highly quantified techniques that pigeonhole the empirical social world into the operational definitions that the researcher has constructed" (Filstead, 1971, p. 6).

While validity may become a serious problem in scientific research when *a priori* assumptions are imposed upon social reality, the problem of validity is considerably lessened when qualitative methodological procedures are employed (Filstead, 1971). However, concern over the reliability of the data is increased, since the researcher observes and interprets data that are obtained from a limited number of respondents whose experiences may differ from participants in another organization, and whose perceptions may or may not agree with the perceptions of other respondents in the same organization.

Site uniqueness means that the findings may illuminate program development, implementation, and continuation in the organization studied, but the findings may not support broad generalizations about integration. In an attempt to address this limitation, multiple sites and multiple interviews were used. Studying a variety of settings, processes, events, and actors is more likely to result in findings that characterize a larger number of schools than might be legitimate on purely statistical grounds (Miles and Huberman, 1984).

Another limitation of the study is researcher bias. Observations of programs, review of documents, and analysis of interviews are filtered through the researcher, whose knowledge, cultural history, and prejudices may be unconsciously biased. An attempt to address this limitation was to verify conclusions by peer review, site research team review, and re-interviewing respondents when necessary.

The method of collecting data also limits the study. Information about program adoption, implementation, and continuation was obtained primarily through personal interviews with key informants. In some cases, the key informants were not involved in the program at its adoption, and could report only what they had heard from other members of the organization. Multiple informants for each site were used to minimize this problem.

Finally, any longitudinal study of this nature suffers if staff turnover occurs, and the Leadership for Change Project experienced more than the usual degree of turnover. The SEDL staff liaisons for the Arkansas, New Mexico, and Texas sites each changed three times, often leaving a short gap of time when there was no liaison for the site. Fortunately, the senior research associate with overall responsibility for all the case studies filled in as a temporary site liaison when necessary, and there was no turnover in her position or in the other senior research associate position on the project. Since these two senior research associates were, respectively, the site liaisons to the Louisiana and Oklahoma sites, the case studies of these two sites had the continuity of a single liaison assuming primary responsibility for the site throughout the study period.

Glossary

At-Risk Student	At-risk students have a high probability of "leaving school unprepared for successful employment, further education, or productive citizenship," (Office of Educational Research and Improvement, p. 7). At least three socioeconomic indicators are statistically correlated with dropping out of school. At-risk students include "those from poverty households, from single parent homes, and from minority backgrounds," (Office of Educational Research and Improvement, p. 5).
Leadership	Leadership is the process of persuasion or example by which an individual (or team) induces a group to pursue objectives held by that individual (or team) or shared by the individual (or team) and others in the organization (Gardner, 1990). While an official position of authority may be advantageous, a leader can be anyone, including school board members, superintendents and other central office staff, principals, lead or mentor teachers, parents or community representatives, or students.
Innovative leader	Leaders who envision and implement new practices different from those already established within their local contexts, notwithstanding any use of the practice outside of the local context.
Implementation	Three stages of change: (1) an initiation or *development* stage, when a need is recognized or an opportunity arises, and planning begins; (2) the action or *implementation* stage, when plans move from the drawing board into action; and (3) an institutionalization or *continuation* stage after plans have been tested, when decisions and actions permanently embed the change into the system (or reject it). Where the term *implementation* refers to the second action stage only, the context hopefully makes that clear.

Successful Implementation	Implementation is *successful* if the necessary and sufficient components of the desired improvement or change are being practiced by most, if not all, of the people targeted by the change.
School Improvement	A systematic sustained effort aimed at change in learning conditions and other related internal conditions in one or more schools, with the ultimate aim of accomplishing educational goals more effectively (Miles, M. and Ekholm, M., 1985, p. 48).
Developmental and Historical Sites	Site refers to a school that SEDL selected to study leadership and school improvement. Developmental site refers to a school that was selected for Project 3.1 because it was launching an improvement effort while historical site refers to a school that was selected for Project 3.2 because it had a history of school improvement.

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